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CHARLOTTE ACKERMAN:

A Theatrical Romance,

FOUNDED UPON

INTERESTING FACTS IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNG ARTIST OF
THE LAST CENTURY.

BY

OTTO MÜLLER.

Translated from the German

BY

MRS. CHAPMAN COLEMAN AND HER DAUGHTERS,

(THE TRANSLATORS OF THE MÜHLBACH NOVELS.)



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CHARLOTTE ACKERMAN.

CHAPTER I.

ONE of the many narrow and intricate streets of Hamburg, formerly known under the name of passages, and during the last century, the abode of the most abject poverty and crime, is, to this day, called "Kugelsort." There, in the midst of the great city of superfluity and magnificence, the most wretched and sorrowful of mankind, in all their terrible and sad shadows, had built up their own especial city of sickness, misery, and vice, under the firm of "Rabble & Co."

In damp, musty, crumbling houses, or rather sheds and courtyards, the latter forming again into narrower streets and dark, cut-off corners, lived the laboring classes of Hamburg. Their existence was as far removed from the joy and lustre of the upper world as their dark and mouldy cellars were shut off from the glorious sunshine. The pale and melancholy rays shone but rarely upon this scene of destitution and human degradation.

The stranger whose feet wandered for the first time in this curious, tortuous confusion of streets, yards, and passages, scarcely wide enough for a carriage track, sinking one moment into rugged ruts and pitfalls, then rising suddenly into rocky hillocks, would seek in vain for an outlet from these crooked labyrinths. The eyes of the haggard inhabitants would be fixed

strangely upon him, showing that he was no less an object of curiosity to them than their wild and gloomy surroundings were to him.

He sees himself suddenly transported, as if by magic, from the noisy, rushing, tumultuous crowd of the great city to a dreary solitude. The busy life, the throng, the activity, has given place to a dread monotony.

The hammering and knocking of the small carpenter, working industriously in his dark room, is sometimes heard in the courtyard, then the cry of a child, then the coquettish tittering and laughing of a painted woman from behind the half-curtained window of a poverty-stricken *salle*, to which a narrow steep stairs from the street was the only entrance. All this recalled the fact that even here there was life and action, virtue and vice, only in a less attractive and ensnaring form.

Here, then, at Kugelsort, on a dreary afternoon in the fall of 1774, a crowd of men of the lowest class, young and old, of beggarly aspect, were assembled around the door of a miserable dwelling. Notwithstanding the heavy rain and the chilly autumn winds, they stood in tattered clothing and gazed curiously into the interior of the house.

It was the abode of destitution, and the unattractive forms of bold women, portrayed clearly the grade of the assembled mob; they were wretched, dirty, and abandoned!

Some with dull indifference, some with that expression of frivolous curiosity which coarse, rude natures display even when looking upon the most terrible and heart-rending scenes, these all stared upon the coffin which was placed upon the floor.

A young maiden lay in the coffin, whose suffering and sorrowful features seemed, even in death and before such coarse witnesses, to denounce the rude hand which had bruised and broken so pure a rose.

She looked so innocent in her wretched shroud, this daughter of sorrow and of shame! with the last decoration of dishonor (in which she, alas! lived and died), the green rosemary, bound with a black ribbon, crowning her head, that the tender and the

pitiful, even without any knowledge of the agony which broke the young heart, would have been moved to ask why so much loveliness and grace might not have been adorned, at least in death, with the maiden myrtle wreath? why the dark rosemary should impress upon the fair brow, even in the coffin, the thorn of contempt. The short life had been laden with guilt, but it had been wept away.

Ah, the rude wild waves of life! how many pearls do they not cast unwittingly upon the desert shore of death out of the slimy deep!

"So she has come to this," shrieked an old woman from the crowd! "There is arrogance! even in her coffin, she must make a display with her assumed innocence. Because her lover was a baron, a fine cavalier, she pictured wonderful things, and the spruce sailor from Heligoland, with the full purse, who made love to her and strove for her favor, was mocked at and despised, and forced to withdraw. Then the girl sickened and her distinguished lover lingered, and lingered away.

"First she sung sad ditties, then tried to throw herself in the water, as if she could not live in her disgrace. At last, however, came the conviction that the Baron was gone for ever, and looking back upon the past, her life went out!"

A disgusting, mocking laugh from the bold women and shameless abuse of the beautiful dead in her rude coffin, was the reply to the old witch, and the pitiless rabble, led by the coarse laugh and cruel jest, had no longer any sympathy with one who had struggled against any communion or fellowship with them, until the mild angel of death had at last released her.

Thus, a gentle custom of the times which prevailed in every rank in Hamburg and was regarded as the last pious duty to the dead, that of laying out the corpse before burial and giving free entrance to friends and acquaintances, was converted, in this rude house, to a scene of the coarsest nature, and even the view of the fair dead, made no impression upon the hearts hardened by destitution and crime. No man pitied her

sad fate ; they had no reverence for her memory, or the gravity of the hour.

Yes, the expression of innocence and purity in the dead features seemed yet more to embitter these degraded souls ; perhaps some mysterious feeling whispered to them that the dead girl was better than themselves. At least she had not been able to bear her shame and live.

Just as the pall-bearers from St. Michel arrived, the tall form of a haggard old woman appeared upon the threshold of the dead-house in an almost theatrical costume.

A saffron-colored handkerchief was bound like a turban around her head, a many colored robe of faded chintz, scarcely decorous in its cut, and a variety of ornaments and ribbons, distinguished her from the other burgher women who were assembled, her painted face with its sharp features and pointed nose, had an unusually bold expression, and her brown eyes had that wandering piercing glance which, with old coquettes, takes the place of the lustre and ardor of lost youth.

With an ugly lapdog under her arm she forced herself unceremoniously and with a commanding bearing through the curious crowd, by whom she was no sooner recognised than a loud cry resounded from every quarter, "Madam Fanny ! Madam Fanny ! make way for Madam Fanny !"

"You shall all bear me witness," cried she passionately and in a strange dialect, as she passed by the coffin, giving it one furtive glance, to the door of the only room on the ground floor. "Where is the woman who has been bold enough to send me word that I shall take away the child of the dead girl ? What have I to do with her or her guests or boarders ? She will see who takes away the child !"

"I will soon settle that," said a fat vulgar woman, who with short gray hair and a by no means winning aspect, now planted herself in the door.

"She there, who is gone," cried the vicious hostess, pointing to the dead girl, "was brought by you to my house. You paid me for her, poorly enough, it is true, for she brought me nothing but

vexation and trouble and expense, and now, forsooth, you will leave the child to my charge also! You must know the father, Madam Fanny; who but you was Bertha's confidante? Turn to him, then, for not another night shall the little worm stay under my roof!"

"The mother is dead, the child is living and must be fed! So be quick, will you, or will you not? if not, then I will seek for justice where I can obtain it without your help—from the inferior court."

The angry hostess now stuck her two thick arms in her sides with indescribable audacity and listened with sublime indifference to the raging outbreak of her adversary, whose passion knew no bounds.

With difficulty the pall-bearers withheld Madam Fanny from making a personal attack upon the hostess. She struggled to escape from them, and with clenched fists to fall upon her, while the spectators, in wild uproar, took sides with one or the other rival combatant, and a fearful tumult raged around the still and placid dead. A few considerate persons tried in vain to allay the tempest.

What had been intended as a peaceful funeral now threatened to become a scene of the wildest violence, and a dozen shrieking women called out for the police.

The crowd increased, and people of a better class assembled before the dead-house, and amongst them one, whose appearance in this wretched spot no one could have expected, saw herself forced by the pressure of the crowd even into the room, while her companion, a good-looking, respectable matron, whose dress proved her to be a servant in a wealthy family, could with difficulty maintain her place behind her mistress. Terrified, she turned from side to side and entreated those who were nearest to her not to touch her fraulein.

This was a young lady of distinguished rank, and though visibly confused and alarmed at the hateful forms and malicious countenances surrounding her, her noble appearance sufficed to allay the fierce strife about the child of the dead mother. In

one moment amazement and curiosity, light whispers and questions took the place of the contest which had raged so furiously.

The young lady who saw herself forced so unexpectedly into this strange world of suffering and sorrow, soon recovered her self-control. She advanced firmly to the coffin and asked with a trembling voice,

“Is this the mother of the poor child? Oh, Lena, look at this beautiful dead girl!

“Who could ever glance upon her fair face without sympathy? No, no, she shall not be so cruelly treated; bring me the child, that I may once more show him to the mother before you take her from him for ever and leave him alone and helpless in this cruel world.”

The solemn tone and imperious bearing had an irresistible influence, and, as if constrained by a higher power, the rude crowd cried out with one voice,

“The child! the child! bring the child of poor Bertha to the beautiful lady!”

Madam Fanny had drawn near the unknown lady in the rich satin dress. She no sooner gazed curiously under the costly Spanish hat, than she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“How! Mademoiselle Ackerman!” she stammered, and before she could be prevented, she kissed the young lady’s hand with much affectation. “Heavens and earth, how did your grace find your way into this house? I suppose you heard the noise in the street and wished to see the cause of the fierce strife. I swear to your excellence that the hostess is in the wrong, yes, as true as I have the honor to see before me the renowned and respected artist, Charlotte Ackerman!”

“Be silent and let me go,” said Charlotte, in much confusion; and she with difficulty released herself from the troublesome woman, who had become in a moment as full of humility and small affectations, as she had been bold and presumptuous.

Greatly embarrassed at being recognised, Charlotte did not know whether to remain or to flee rapidly from the house.

Lena seized her robe and begged her, for God's sake, to depart at once. "Oh, Heavens! what will the people say when they hear that you have been in this house? What will your mother say? and your sister Dorothea? and your Herr brother? Oh, fraulein, go! go at once! I am losing my breath from anxiety!"

So whispered the perplexed matron, in the ears of her young mistress, and sought to drag her away by force from the coffin.

At this moment the child of poor Bertha was handed to Charlotte Ackerman; she seized the half-naked and slumbering baby with trembling hands, pressed it softly, tenderly upon the bosom of the dead mother, and said, "Now all is well, good people, close the coffin and consign the poor body to eternal peace. I will take charge of the child, and that it may not freeze wrap it at once in my warm shawl, until I can buy the necessary clothing.

"Dear frau hostess, you will keep the poor little baby and take care of it faithfully, will you not, until I find another lodging for it? Here is gold for all your trouble, and I will willingly pay you more, as much as you ask, only be careful and let no harm come to the child."

The fierce hostess clutched first mechanically towards the purse, and then to the child, wrapped it in the fine cashmere, and promised, in a stammering voice, to do all mademoiselle commanded.

The name of Charlotte Ackerman had struck all present like an electric spark, although, for the most part, they scarcely knew whom it signified; but the simple utterance of the well-known name had a marked effect upon these people of the lowest class; they forgot at once the touching scene with the child, and gazed with dumb reverence at the renowned wonder of Hamburg.

And now, as Charlotte prepared to leave the house, and with a friendly greeting approached the door, they crowded upon her with stormy zeal, seized and kissed the hem of her robe, and bowed down in reverence as before a heavenly visitant. Those,

who a few moments before were uttering frantic curses against each other, were now calling down blessings upon the good angel, and sobbing out the name of Charlotte Ackerman.

With difficulty she reached the street; Lena urging her to hasten. "Quick, quick, we have no time to lose. The comedy will begin in half an hour, and the keeper of the wardrobe is certainly waiting anxiously for you."

"Comedy!" said Charlotte, as if awakening from a dream; "Oh! Lena, did men but know where the true drama is played, they would not seek the house of dazzling art and wild illusion; they would not shudder and tremble at words learned by heart, nor allow their sensibilities to be agonized by studied acting!"

CHAPTER II.

OPPOSITE St. Michel's Church, in Kreyenkamp street, and in the neighborhood of the merchants' court, stood in those days a two-story dwelling-house, distinguished from the other buildings in the neighborhood by its great size and more modern style.

The balcony, which was adorned with heavy carvings, was supported by three caryatides, and the window-frames and door-posts were also richly carved in arabesques, which contrasted beautifully with the stone-colored wall.

Two beautiful lindens stood on each side of the door, and wound their branches artistically together; by means of the garden shears they were trained into a wall of green leaves in front of the three middle windows of the third story; here and there, however, an opening was made so as to give a view of the street.

The heavy oak door was adorned with polished-metal ornaments, and a hammer, handsomely turned from the wood of the box tree, hung from a brass chain to the door. The bells in present use were unknown at that day, and all who desired admittance made the fact known by one or more light strokes of the hammer upon the door.

At this signal appeared generally at the door of the house we have just described a little old man, foppishly dressed, with a snow-white wig, adorned with hundreds of small curls, which formed a striking contrast to the red face and kindly twinkling eyes.

This was no other than Herr Kreyenpater, the former prompter of the Ackerman troupe, and now the faithful shield and protector of the house; well known, not only in the neighborhood, but in half the great city of Hamburg.

No one who crossed the threshold of the Ackerman house could fail to remark Kreyenpater's wonderful and artistic scrape

of the foot, his light, childish titter, accompanied by extravagant compliments and greetings, during which the little feet, with the great steel buckles and high heels, were so elegantly pointed you could but think he had passed his life in graceful sarabands and minuets.

Kreyenpater generally wore a large pen, with a long feather, behind his ear, in token of his worthy occupation.

Since old age had made him toothless, and unfitted him for his duties of prompter, his principal service in the house was that of secretary and accountant.

He kept the house expenses carefully, and, besides this, all the written and illustrated copies of the roles prepared for the celebrated daughters of the house came from his artistic pen, and made them objects of envy to all the other members of the troupe.

Only true love of art could have enabled him to paint or draw such elegant characters on paper. They were equal to copperplate; and the better the assiduous and adroit copyist succeeded in his work, the more fully was he convinced that the young mistress, whose business it was to commit the role to memory, would distinguish herself above all others before the public on the evening of the representation.

When Dorothea in comic and Charlotte in tragic roles, achieved those triumphs which made their names so famous in Hamburg, and indeed throughout Germany, Kreyenpater had the proud consciousness that this result had been attained in a large measure by his incomparable copies; indeed, he solemnly believed that the two sisters were indebted to him for their celebrity; that only through the magic power of his pen were they properly impressed with the great thoughts and words of the poets.

This was, as I have said the first appearance which met the stranger on the threshold of the Ackerman house.

The interior arrangements corresponded fully with the description we have given.

Everywhere the spirit of exemplary order and gentle housewifery reigned, combined with pure refined taste and solid

prosperity. According to the narrow ideas of that day it would have been difficult to believe that this was the home of the theatre Director.

And yet it was even so; the house to which we have introduced the reader, was built by Conrad Ernst Ackerman, who died three years and six months after the completion of his house. He had been summoned by a sudden death from his beloved family and his active artistic life.

Since that time, it had been occupied by the widow Madame Ackerman, her two daughters, and Frederic Ludwig Schröder, the son of a former marriage.

In connection with his mother, he now carried on the direction of the theatre. With his stepfather's worthy calling he had inherited his honored rank as burgher.

With this explanation we resume the thread of our narrative. We find ourselves, the morning after the scene, at Kugelsort, in the large family room of Frau Ackerman, where after breakfast the little family generally assembled for a quiet good-humored hour before the many duties, cares, and distractions of the day were forced upon them. The artist calling, in connection with the Directory, occupied them fully, so that only late in the evening, after the theatre was closed, could the family assemble again around their mother.

It appeared however that the usually confidential, natural, and kindly tone was banished from the family circle, on this morning. Charlotte was not present, and upon the countenance of both the mother and Dorothea there lowered a cloud of discontent.

Schröder, also, did not seem to be taking his breakfast in his best morning mood.

It was apparent that a most disagreeable conversation had just been broken off, but that the discomfort and ill-humor it had produced had not been set aside.

At last Schröder broke the silence, and said in a bitter tone:

"It appears to be Charlotte's fate to make every beautiful and praiseworthy sentiment of her heart disagreeable and painful in its manifestation to herself and others. Her wish is to do right,

but she allows herself to be carried away by the impulse of the moment; she acts without consideration, from the inspiration of enthusiastic feeling, and thus gives to her conduct more the appearance of artificial geniality than of pure, natural goodness of heart. By her adventure of yesterday she has created more prejudice against us than she has done good."

"I grieve to say that I must agree with you," said Madame Ackerman, sighing deeply. "As a maiden, she has acted unpardonably in thus playing with her good name, and she is yet more inexcusable as an artist, as the world is a thousand times more bitter and slanderous against actresses than against any other women. Gracious heaven! how will our enemies interpret the visit of Mademoiselle Ackerman to Kugelsort? How will Dr. Dreyer, in his malice, carry this scandal from house to house! how terribly will he make the actress suffer, in his weekly journal, for the inconsiderate act which the young and inexperienced girl alone should be held responsible for! The merchants will relate the story to their wives and daughters when they go home from the Exchange, and we shall see ourselves received this evening at the theatre with hissing and mockery."

"Dear mother, you surely forget that Charlotte plays Rutland this evening," said Dorothea.

"So much the worse," said her brother, angrily; "for the tongue of the slanderer will take advantage of the lustre of her talent to place her conduct of yesterday still deeper in shadow. The public will"—

"Honor Charlotte Ackerman, as ever before," said Dorothea, impressively, and fixing her great beautiful eyes firmly upon her brother. "Where are you wandering in your zeal for your sister's honor? It may be that Charlotte has acted hastily, it may be that the wickedness of some men may go so far as to make her noble and generous act an occasion of slander, but let it be so; their satisfaction will not be of long continuance, and as to what relates to Doctor Dreyer, this time, at least, he will not thunder out his satires against us; for he solemnly declared,

yesterday evening, in a wine cellar, before many witnesses, that he would never again seek to injure this good and generous girl with a stroke of his pen."

Schröder, whom the last remark of his sister seemed more to embitter than to convince, was about to reply, when Dr. Unzer was announced.

"God be thanked!" said Dorothea. Her mother looked up with surprise, and Schröder asked, with a perplexed air, if any one in the house was ill?

The young physician entered immediately. His exterior was inviting in the extreme, and his bearing and manner betrayed, at the first glance, the man of rank and intellectual capacity. His pale face, sharp profile, and dark, flashing eyes, expressed goodness of heart and clear intellect; his countenance bore the traces of the fatigues incident upon his profession and of persevering study; he was tall, thin, and slightly bent, which gave him sometimes an outward expression of heaviness, which was contradicted, however, by his youthful and active form.

"You come at the right moment," said Schröder, advancing to meet him. The ladies received him as a friend of the house, who knows himself to be always welcome, and greeted him gaily, though their perplexity was only half concealed.

"Yes, at the right moment, though uncalled for; I saw during my third morning visit, that I must commence my day's labor in Kreyencamp street, if I wished to get through my sick list before the sun went down. I, as your physician, ought certainly to know, first of all, what is going on; so, at least, think all my reasonable patients. They question me, storm me; I must explain to them; I must relate minutely, point by point, what all this history is about the Ackermans; how Charlotte came to be at Kugelsort, what she had to do with this Portuguese Fanny, with the dead girl, with the baby, with the hostess?"

"Now, best Mamma, why do you look so confused—so shocked? and you, Dorothea, why are you so agitated? My God! what has happened?"

"Nothing, but a new exhibition of the geniality of our little Emilia Galotti," said Schröder, passionately forcing his friend to be seated.

“ There, seat yourself, you Delphic oracle of all the aunts, cousins, scandal-mongers, &c. Listen to me patiently ; a wise man like yourself, makes a good story out of everything ; why not, then, of Mademoiselle Charlotte Ackerman, of the Portuguese Fanny, and the Frau hostess of Kugelsort ? ”

In this bitter tone, and with rapid utterance, he related to his friend the events of Kugelsort, with which we are already acquainted. Schröder did not confine himself, however, to the facts of the case, but allowed his own passions to speak. He was a man of a good heart, but uncommonly hasty and quick-tempered ; particularly animated by certain small prejudices.

Schröder belonged to that class of men, who in youth, have too great a respect for the lightly moved judgments of men.

The dignity of art, and the dignity of family, had in his eyes almost the same significance ; and the boundless love which he felt for his sisters, did not prevent him, when occasion offered, even in innocent and trivial things, from torturing them by his dark humors and sharp peculiarities.

“ *So is it*, when a man is a brother and, at the same time, a theatre director ; ” was generally the refrain of his song of sorrow, and he closed his narrative this day with this sigh of complaint, so well known in his family circle.

Unzer had listened to him quietly ; his eyes sparkled from time to time, as was his custom when made gay and happy by any event ; with half-closed eyes he listened to the speaker and played restlessly with his finger upon the arms of the chair, from which, in his absence of mind, he tore a velvet tassel.

In answer to Schröder’s question as to what he thought of the affair, he looked at him for a long time dreamily, shrugged his shoulders, and gave an indefinite answer.

When Dorothea, without reserve, described the passionate scene which had taken place the evening before, between Charlotte and her brother, and demanded his sincere opinion, he was more decided, shook his head disapprovingly, and said gravely :

“ If you ask the opinion of the physician, I must repeat my advice so often given. Charlotte must be left in quiet, the

voice of her soul must have liberty of action, and she must be spared all violent excitement. If, however, I must speak as a friend of the house, I must regret with Schröder that this noble act of our high-hearted Charlotte has come to the knowledge of the world, though, I confess, I can scarcely see how she can be misjudged. In truth, I am only fearing the appearance which the story will make, and forgetting that Charlotte stood even in degraded Kugelsort, as pure in her triumph as she stood upon the boards on the evening of her most dazzling success. Yes, even because she is an actress, who, by her skill, through her art and talent, awakens our sensibilities and our wonder, does this gentle and humane act make her more charming. In real life she has followed the impulse of her beautiful soul! Looking now at the whole affair, which can in no respect be changed, I am convinced that this praiseworthy and generous deed should be looked at on its best and brightest side.

"Yes, Fritz," said he, springing up and seizing his hat and stick, "I will at all events prove to you to-day that I deserve to be called the Delphian oracle of Hamburg. I will myself carry the new fairy tale from house to house, and eye to eye will I relate it to our Philistines and city cousins! We must have the courage to let a noble act speak for itself, and the public judgment will estimate it rightly. Suppose a pair of worthy wigs should shake their heads with displeasure over the affair, or a pair of old women should creep away in a paroxysm of holy zeal, that cannot change the character of this good deed. So I commend you to God, best mamma. I ask for a place in your joys to-night. We shall live to see that our Rutland has as little reason to shrink from the judgment of the world before the footlights as in Kugelsort. Good morning!"

Unzer hastened away, his usually pale face suffused with a soft red. You might have supposed he was hastening to some death-bed, but the wish to win from Charlotte at least the second place in this drama of humanity gave wings to his feet. He soon reached the intricate street. The worthy and skilful

physician was as well known here as in the palaces of the rich and distinguished—perhaps even better known. With the wealthy his skill and experience alone were valued, but in this abode of destitution his humanity was often called into action. He reached Kugelsort, and glided unseen into the house of the rude hostess.

CHAPTER III.

FOR the first time since Charlotte's appearance on the stage in Hamburg, she felt oppressed and sorrowful, and she could not think of the evening without feverish excitement.

The more rash than earnestly meant declaration of her brother, that she had by her adventure at Kugelsort brought her good name into disrepute, followed her unceasingly.

This young girl was by nature inclined to self-torture, and in spirit she now saw herself given up to the insults and contempt of that public upon whose hands she had heretofore been borne aloft.

The heart of the artist trembled even more at the thought of this disgrace than the heart of the maiden. The dread of the public, to which she had heretofore been a stranger, tortured her more than the cause of her unhappiness. She felt no longer secure in her artist-world; her imagination brought before her every moment the ghost of an agonizing reality; she was almost convinced that by one thoughtless step she had lost for ever that path in life in which she had walked so securely and so happily.

With our present views of the relations of actors to the public, and their honored rank in society, it may perhaps seem strange that so insignificant an affair should produce such an excitement and be looked at by those nearly interested with such anxious importance, and yet this may be easily understood when we remember what a mass of prejudices existed at that time against actors, and made it almost impossible for them to achieve a worthy and honorable existence and a desirable position in burgher life.

In Hamburg, particularly where, at that time, a highly-orthodox priesthood exercised a surpassing influence upon public opinion, the actors, but a short time before the Ackerman period, were obliged to be content with a rank in society below the

marionettes and jugglers; from the pulpit they were called "Wallachians," "Syrens," &c., &c. About this time a better taste and a juster appreciation of art was aroused, and the voice of a Lessing silenced the jealous zeal of Götze and his disciples.

The family of Ackermans were the first who by an exemplary life subdued the prejudices against actors, and won from the burghers that high consideration which they gladly accorded to the worthy and excellent director of the theatre.

The beauty and virtue of the daughters; Schröder's dignity and admirable system; the well-ordered house of the mother, and an ample fortune, were sufficient proof, even in Hamburg, of an honest and solid family. Soon the first circles of society were opened to them, and the social talent and refined attractive manners of the two sisters, Dorothea and Charlotte, gave new brilliancy and power of attraction to their assemblies.

It belonged to "*good tone*" to honor and receive the Ackermans, and even the purse-proud patrician, whose flag floated upon every sea, felt that the presence of the Ackermans added lustre to his house. These things, coupled with the brilliancy of their artistic talent, gave to actors generally a higher rank.

After these explanations, the reader can understand why the innocent adventure of the young Ackerman produced such excitement in Hamburg, and the consternation with which Schröder and his mother first heard the strange story.

Dorothea was the only one who remained calm and unmoved at this event, which seemed to threaten the good name of the house. She tried to inspire her sister with her own firm and beautiful confidence. If she did not succeed in wholly quieting the downcast and discouraged girl, she constrained her mother and brother to silence, forcing them to see that their alarm and reproaches would entirely unfit Charlotte for the duties of the evening.

While they were at table, Schröder's cashier came in and announced that every loge had been disposed of.

The tragedy, "The Favorite of Princes," which had been

performed for the first time a few evenings before, had become suddenly renowned, and was to be repeated that evening. The cashier declared, that the crowd had come to quarrelling and blows in their eagerness for tickets, and that they were even now passing into the opera court.

Charlotte became deadly pale ; the spoon fell from her hand ; a stream of tears burst from her eyes ; she sprang from her chair in passionate excitement, and exclaimed :

“Yes ; so it is ! I must be an actress, but you will not allow me to have human impulses ; but my resolution is taken. You, Fritz, see me for the last time upon your stage, if the role of Rutland does not this evening restore to me doubly, yes, trebly, what you have rashly torn from me, my peace of mind and my good conscience ! I swear this to you, so truly as at this moment, I am more unhappy than I have ever been.”

“Go ! go ! cruel one,” said she, turning away as her brother, shocked by her suffering aspect, tried to take her in his arms and comfort her. “I cannot forgive you now ; but this evening, after the play, I will tell you if I will, if I can forgive you !”

CHAPTER IV.

THE Hamburg Theatre in which, under Schröder's direction, the dramatic skill of Germany celebrated its greatest triumph, was not magnificent according to the tastes of that time, but it was large and conveniently arranged. On both sides of the front there were two stalls, where the tickets were sold. The passages and steps which led to the loges were narrow and uncomfortable. The interior consisted of a stage, a parterre, two circles of loges, and a gallery. The room was adorned with busts of Sophocles, Euripides, &c. On the drop curtain was a figure of liberty seated under a canopy, and conferring her protection upon tragedy and comedy.

The room could accommodate about three hundred persons, and on this evening it was filled to overflowing; this was only the case on extraordinary occasions. The parterre was full, and also the gallery. The orchestra was obliged to be vacated; just before the curtain rose, to make room for the audience.

The loges were filled with the élite of Hamburg society in their richest robes. It was a dazzling combination of riches, beauty, and luxury such as belong to a great fête.

The tragedy, "The Favorite of Princes," was composed out of three or four English dramas. It was happily and effectively arranged for the stage according to the tastes of that time. The dialogue was somewhat monotonous, but the arrangements of the scenes, and the characteristics of the principal persons showed marks of progress, and the two last acts were nobly dramatic.

The subject was the Court of Queen Elizabeth, and her well-known heart-history, in her intercourse with the Earl of Essex, the all powerful favorite of the Queen.

The cabals of his enemies succeeded at last in disgracing the Earl, who was blinded by his arrogance and ambition, and

the discovery of his secret marriage with Rutland, the beautiful maid of honor of the Queen, completed his overthrow.

Essex died upon the scaffold, a victim to two-fold jealousy, after he had saved the life of his friend Southampton ; who was involved in his misfortune, by the aid of the fatal ring, which Elizabeth had once given him, promising that she would refuse him no request which was accompanied by the ring.

On the news of his death, the lovely Rutland became a maniac, and Queen Elizabeth appreciated too late the moral of the play : " How lightly princes are deceived ! "

We have just made known the fearful anxiety with which Charlotte looked forward to the representation of this tragedy. Isolated and inconsiderate expressions uttered in her presence, made her feel that the role of Rutland would not probably be the important feature of the evening. She knew from former experience that the Hamburg public had more than once held a stern court of justice over the private lives of actors and actresses. Her conscience was pure, and yet she felt indescribable agony at the possibility of an unfriendly reception, to which she could oppose nothing but her innocence and her hitherto blameless life.

Charlotte was dressed in the rich costume of an English maid of honor, and had never been more enchanting ; even her deadly pallor, which she refused to conceal by rouge, was suited to her tragic role, and heightened the melancholy expression of her countenance.

" Rutland had also a bad conscience," said she smiling to Dorothea, who was entreating her to put on a little rouge ; " how could the unhappy one look blooming and gay ? Must she not be in terror, every moment, lest her secret marriage with Essex should be discovered at court, and her pure name be overcast with shame and dishonor ? "

At this moment, the noise and tumult of the audience became louder ; they were fiercely impatient for the commencement of the piece.

Accustomed as she was to all this disturbance, Charlotte

almost lost her self-control, and Dorothea exhausted her eloquence in trying to console and calm her.

A servant now entered, and brought a superb bouquet of fresh flowers, from an unknown hand.

"Take this as a good omen," said Dorothea, fastening the flowers in her girdle.

Charlotte looked at the kindly gift with glad emotion, but became crimson when the woman added, "Something extraordinary will surely happen this evening! In the flower store by the French church there is not a single wreath or bouquet to be had, though the wise man had supplied himself abundantly for the evening. I wager Mademoiselle Ackerman will not leave the stage this evening unhurt; the whole parterre is fragrant as a garden of roses."

And now the bell rang for the curtain to rise. Charlotte, somewhat encouraged, followed her sister, who had the role of Queen Elizabeth; behind the scenes Schröder came to meet them, with the actor Brockman, who was to fill the part of Essex; he was a finished cavalier in form and face, which made him the darling minion of the ladies; this evening he was glittering in the lustre of manly beauty and knighthood. He kissed Charlotte's hand, and said: "How wondrously this languishing pallor becomes my lovely Rutland! He who will not envy Essex from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, has never been smiled upon by Thalia."

The curtain rose; and in the third scene, Charlotte followed the Queen upon the stage. She was received by profound silence; before her eyes everything seemed to twinkle and glimmer; reeling she advanced before the lamps to speak, but her tongue almost refused its office; her whole strength was required to make the first few words of her role audible. Throughout the house not a sound was heard but her voice, and now, when she had finished her speech, still, deep silence! It was fortunate for Charlotte that she must leave the stage.

This then was her reception as Rutland! She, who had never before stepped upon the boards without the most encour-

aging signs of delight and encouragement, now saw herself received in silence, slighted, despised !

But strange to say, this humiliation which she had believed she could never support, heightened, exalted her genius, and restored, as if by magic, all her artistic power ; she pressed back secretly a burning tear, and when she appeared again upon the stage, in that scene where she meets with Essex, after his return from Ireland, she developed such wondrous talent, such sweet and trembling passion that the audience, carried away by the power of her genius, so true to nature, so genial, broke out into a wild storm of applause ; and now her final victory was certain, every new scene brought her new triumphs.

The enthusiasm of the spectators increased her inspiration, and she unfolded on this evening the entire strength of her genial, artist soul.

The loving wife, full of enthusiasm and ardor ; the happy wife, exulting in her infinite and endless joy ; heroic in the hour of danger, and at last the sorrowful, suffering, despairing wife !

Such a Rutland was never seen ! nothing can ever compare with the impression, made by the mad scene, when, with a dying voice, with her arms hanging nerveless by her side ; rigid, torpid, and as if looking down into the grave of her love and of her youth, she breathed out the words : "Tears come from the heart, and mine is dead !" That was a sound of such boundless woe, such endless agony of soul, that no eye was dry, and nothing but weeping and choking sobs was heard throughout the house.

At last at the command of the Queen, the poor Rutland was carried from the stage.

Schröder clasped his sister, who was almost fainting, in his arms, and for some time he lost the power of speech.

The whole troupe crowded around her, and while the play, in which she had attained such rare success, was being completed, Charlotte was enjoying in the presence of her enthusiastic companions, that blessed feeling of pure unmixed satisfaction,

which is, under all circumstances, the true artist's only and most beautiful reward.

A few moments later the curtain fell, the play was over! With a thundering outcry the public demanded to see Rutland; trembling, hesitating, Charlotte arose from her seat, and called to Brockman to accompany her. He refused, however, and said: "This evening belongs to you alone; such laurels must not be divided!"

Louder, sterner, was the call; the curtain rose; Schröder thrust the trembling girl softly from behind the scenes; and, as if upon a given signal, the whole troupe pressed forward upon the stage.

Charlotte was received with such shouts of applause that the whole house trembled; suddenly, as if controlled by some invisible power, there was profound silence.

Upon the front bench of the parterre, generally occupied by the special friends of the theatre, authors, poets, &c., a small man arose, and in a loud voice, which resounded through the house, he exclaimed:

"Laurels for our Rutland! Heaven's choicest blessing upon the pitying angel of Kugelsort; the love and the honor of men for her reward! Long live the embodied grace of the purest philanthropy! Long live Charlotte Ackerman!"

He who thus spoke was no other than Doctor Dreyer, author and poet, well known throughout Hamburg for his intellect and wit.

We have heard before that the doctor was no friend of the Ackermans; greater, therefore, was the impression made by his words, and like an electric spark they pierced the whole assembly.

This was not the common applause granted to the successful actress.

Every lady in the loges arose from her seat and waved her handkerchief with kindly greetings, and hundreds of arms were extended as if in benediction; a rain of flowers fell at the same moment upon Charlotte Ackerman, who was deafened and almost

frightened, at this unexpected ovation ; she trembled from head to foot, and covered her fair, pale face with her hands. And now, at a signal from Schröder, the curtain fell. Trembling, he sprang towards his sister, and pressed her warmly to his heart.

“What shall I do, Charlotte, to obtain your forgiveness?” Charlotte laid her beautiful head softly on his shoulder, looked at him with tender emotion, and said with charming grace and goodness, “You shall never think worse of me than you can answer for to your own noble heart; this is all I ask.”

“Enough of emotion!” cried Reinike, who was always of a merry mood, and had played the part of Southampton most successfully. “To you, friend Essex,” said he, turning gracefully to Brockman, “I have, this evening, been indebted for my life. I thank you, Charlotte, for having taught me, for the first time, what a great artist is; but this never-to-be-forgotten evening must not wind up like all the rest, in a stupid nightcap. I ask all the assembled gentlemen, who move the car of Thespis, go with me to the Pelzerstrasse. Eckhof rushed like a madman from the theatre, during the fourth act, to drown his vexation in the wine cup at having yielded up to me the role of Essex.

“Come, Schröder, Brockman, Lambrecht, and all you immortals, we have well played our parts as English peers, we will now drink as Dutch comedians.

“According to the proverb of Musarion: ‘A wise man shows his theory in his life.’”

CHAPTER V.

THE hotel called "Obergesellschaft" was the common place of resort of all the artist notables of Hamburg, and the long narrow room on the ground floor, which was used as a wine room, would often scarcely contain the guests who were attracted by the reputation of the house and the good company.

The actors and their friends generally took possession of the table in the back part of the room. The good host and the other guests allowed them this privilege, as their presence always increased the general merriment.

On this evening the wine room was exceptionally empty. It seemed that Thalia did not smile upon the priest of Bacchus.

At the front table a few officers from Altona were drinking, and, between times, embracing the pretty blonde servant girl from Bierlanden, who did not seem altogether indifferent to their jests and attentions.

The stout little host, a true prototype of a well fed Hamburger wine merchant, rushed to and fro, with his black leather cap jauntily resting on his left ear, and both hands buried in the pockets of his white piqué camisole. He was impatient at the unaccustomed emptiness of his shop, and probably philosophized profoundly over the useless and unchristian nature of the drama, and the marked difference between a well-filled theatre and an empty wine shop.

He was interrupted in these melancholy considerations by the entrance of Eckhof, who, contrary to his custom, was the first to take his place. All the other actors and their friends still lingered at the theatre.

The rosy face of Herr Von Klefeker brightened up at the appearance of the celebrated mimic. He judged rightly that if Eckhof, who was known for his great moderation, could not remain away, the rest of the merry troupe would most certainly soon appear.

"Very handsome of you, Herr Eckhof," said he, smiling upon his guest, "to be so punctual." Eckhof planted his tall and high-shouldered figure behind the table, and without taking off his hat rested his elbows carelessly upon it. He seemed very absent-minded, and scarcely noticed the words of his host, whose loquacity was however not in the least checked.

"The play will soon be over and then we shall hear from every side. The piece was very pretty, but without Herr Von Eckhof it don't go off well.

"But what can Herr Schröder be about with his heathenish and blood-thirsty tragedies—and every week a new piece, each more renowned than the other, so that the public lose their breath from curiosity and admiration. I myself once had a passion for the stage; truly, it was a long time ago. The choice was then small, but we were contented with little. We went to the theatre to be amused with the harlequins and their merry jests and sports, and thus forget our 'house-cross.'

"To-day, however! Oh, how the times change! We go to the theatre to weep, and moan, and lament, and swoon away—as if there was not suffering, and gloom, and wretchedness enough in life. Ah! I shall never forget those merry days. Alas! we never now see the comedy of the 'Three Stepmothers,' or the 'Merry Shoemaker,' or the 'Monkey Island,'—which has been through life my favorite piece."

"Yes, yes, dear Anselmus, those beautiful times are gone for ever," sighed Eckhof, with assumed sadness. "The 'Monkey Island' was also my favorite, and it is still dearer to me than a dozen dark tragedies, in which vice, wretchedness and heathenism reign supreme—virtue and innocence, however, being almost always derided and slain.

"Oh, if I only dared say what I know," sighed Eckhof, mysteriously, emptying his glass hastily; "when I am drinking the cursed history comes back to me. This Schröder, with his godless speculation, will bring us all down to everlasting destruction, unless Satan himself soon snatches him away from the earth."

“Merciful powers! what terrible words,” cried the host, not knowing whether Eckhof was jesting or earnest, and gazing at the actor; frightened and curious, the latter, with inimitable pantomime, assumed the appearance of a man in whose breast heaven and hell were now making the last desperate struggle.

Herr Anselmus Klefeker, whose credulity was as proverbial as his faith in unnatural things, was aroused to the wildest curiosity by the mysterious manner of his guest; and Eckhof seemed no longer able to restrain himself from opening his whole heart to him. With a timid glance, he beckoned his host nearer, and stammered out anxiously, “You are right, Anselmus, it is better to speak than to be silent; above all, when silence is dangerous, and some fine morning might cost us our soul’s salvation and our month’s wages.

“I declare to you, then, that which seems almost incredible! unheard of! that Schröder, by these dark tragedies, has no other object than to deliver mankind over to the snares of the devil.

“For this purpose he uses all this devil’s lumber, hellish crimes, madness, blood, murder, daggers, poison, perjury! With these horrible things he entertains the audience in order to make them apostate from the true faith and accustom them to the cruelties and horrors of the olden time.

“Everything under his directory is intended to make wickedness flourish and to re-establish the kingdom of Satan in this world.

“Only listen to the horrible curses, the blasphemous words, the passionate imprecations, which the actors utter every evening during the performance of their roles!

“What do you suppose, Anselmus, moves Schröder to these sinful exertions? Love of money, or want of good taste? God forbid! Schröder is actuated only and alone by his artist pride; he is resolved to be the greatest amongst the German directors; therefore he carries on these profligate illusions. His soul is not his own! he has joked it away! sold it to the devil!—and I—I myself have seen the terrible one, clothed in flesh, traffick-

ing behind the scenes with our principal; yes, the theatre devil, alive and kicking!"

"The theatre devil! how did he look?" cried the host, seizing Eckhof's arm, in trembling terror.

"He is not so easy to describe," said Eckhof, without a change of countenance; "he was an old man of thin form, with ashen gray complexion, with a hawk nose and eyes, which he rolled about like coals of fire.

"At first I took him for a reviewer, though he was as elegantly dressed as a French abbé, with a hat under his arm, a dagger at his side, silk hose, and high red heels.

"They were standing together, behind the scenes, the theatre devil and our principal, and I was convinced, from their actions, that they were quarrelling.

"The stranger had an unearthly look to me, and I drew near unnoticed, and heard him charging Schröder, in a snarling voice, with having broken the compact, by representing, from time to time, pious or moral plays, in which the principal applause did not fall to his share.

"Schröder stood in an agony of perspiration before the 'terrible one,' more devout than I have ever seen him, and could not utter one word of justification. The devil preached him down pitilessly; called my name more than once, and charged the Principal with not giving me enough to do; he relied mostly upon roles of my calibre, &c.

"You may well imagine, my dear Anselmus, how I felt, and what a light broke in on my soul.

"'Away, once for all, with your pious plays,' said the devil, 'or I will take both Eckhof and yourself to the lower regions. Aha! you will learn there, how to play comedy;' so saying, he sprang on a trap door, and disappeared so suddenly under the stage, that the whole building seemed to creak and totter."

Herr Anselmus Klefeker was terribly excited by this narrative, and the dramatic gestures which accompanied it. It required some time to recover his self-control, after receiving this minute description of the theatre devil, whose existence he had

never before suspected ; he made a hesitating attempt to convince Eckhof that the thing was impossible ; but the actor declared, that what he had seen with his eyes and heard with his ears, he could not disbelieve ; in fact, he had lived in anguish of spirit ever since he had seen the " terrible one."

" Go, now, to the theatre, dear Anselmus," said he, " they are now probably playing the fifth act of the new English tragedy, and convince yourself of the demoniac power which the theatre devil is, at this moment, exercising over the Hamburg public. There is not a single one of the audience who is in possession of his five senses.

" The devil has, by means of the little Ackerman, perverted their understandings ; one moment they are as frantic as madmen, the next, they are sobbing and weeping so bounteously, that the parterre is in danger of an overflow.

" And shall our honored public and a wise senate endure this sort of thing ?

" Oh, believe me, good Anselmus, this theatre devil is no chimaera ! In the loges, in the galleries, in the parterre, behind the scenes, is he ever active ; and the end of this thing will be, that we will go down to destruction : thanks to this Schröder, who has sold his own soul to the devil.

" Alas ! alas ! if I had only paid my debts ; and you, also, my brave and good Anselmus, I am heavily charged in your books, am I not ? "

" Do not trouble yourself about that, best Eckhof," said the host, who already, in spirit, saw the devil interfering with his domestic economy.

The story of the mimic had touched him on his weakest point ; he was as superstitious as he was good natured ; gave Eckhof his full belief, and hastened to relieve his honored guest of some portion of the anxiety and terror with which he looked at the end of Schröder's compact with the " wicked one."

He brought forward his great account book, and opened it at the page adorned with Eckhof's renowned name.

The actor gave one glance of horror at the long list of eatings

and drinkings, sighed heavily, and looked so imploringly at Anselmus, that a Christian purpose which had dawned in his soul, ripened in the twinkling of an eye, and with a kindly smile, he said to his debtor:

“Not a hair shall turn gray over this debt; the ‘wicked one’ shall not disturb you on my account, and that you may know that I mean well by you, I will strike out the half of your account, and consider it paid.”

“You will do that?” cried Eckhof, joyously, as the generous host passed a pen over half the items; “well, no man can say that I ‘reckoned without my host.’ But you shall not find me unthankful, good Anselmus, and that you may see ‘that I mean well by you,’ I will strike out the other half of my debt, and consider it paid.”

With these words he struck out the other items, and when good Anselmus had recovered himself from his astonishment at this undeniable proof of the friendship of his guest, he declared himself satisfied, as he was convinced the devil could do him no harm, as far as Eckhof was concerned.

The arrival of the other actors now brought into the quiet wine room noisy life and activity.

After having received the applause of the public in rich measure, they gladly returned to the world of reality, and were soon assembled merrily around the table by Eckhof.

Amongst the actors Schröder alone failed.

The rest of the society consisted of authors, critics and translators, and many educated sons of the Hamburg patricians, enthusiastic friends of the theatre, and the handsome, rich Lord Elkins, who had just arrived from England with his tutor, Mr. Hill.

The other tables were now soon filled with guests from the theatre, full of the impression which the tragedy had made upon them. They crowded around the actors, particularly Brockman, and congratulated him upon his new triumph.

At the actors’ table the tragedy became the subject of conversation. It was the law that every one should express his

opinion freely, and after the most animated discussion, a good understanding always prevailed, a noble and pure enthusiasm for their art was a bond of union and reconciliation.

"It is a pity, Eckhof, that you did not remain till the conclusion of the play," said the old councillor Koch. "The last act was certainly the finest; yes, the dramatic merit of the piece was concentrated in this act."

"Why should I deny the fact that I left the theatre to avoid the overpowering impression of this last scene?"

"I almost lost my breath during the first act; pity for the fate of Rutland so agitated me that although I myself meddle a little with such work, I almost forgot that it was all art and illusion; I mistook the masterly achievement for a heartbreaking reality.

"This, however, the artist should never do; he thus loses his individuality; the effect of the great acting overcomes him to such a degree that he becomes confused, and before he is aware of it he grasps *involuntarily* into a new sphere, and in place of his own original talent, he brings to light, even in the happiest circumstances, only a successful imitation. For an actor who plays with warm hearts and with cold calculation, such great rivals are dangerous, they turn him aside from his own path, make a hostile entrance into his interior world and take forcible possession of it."

This was great praise from the lips of such an artist as Eckhof. Wittenberg declared, on the contrary, that Charlotte had formed herself by Eckhof's teaching. He, however, denied this forcibly, and said in continuance:

"I treasure the little Ackerman as a genial actress, but I bow down low before her genial womanhood. I have no word to describe it, but there is something of demoniac power in this girl, by which she rules us. Never will such perfection be reached by the aid alone of art and study. The play of expression, the movement of the arms, the tones of the voice,—all this can be learned. But the soul, my friends, that wondrous abyss, that soul, full of ardor of glowing flame, Charlotte did

not acquire, nor yet that prophetic eye with which she looks into the souls of men, nor the voice with which she speaks those trembling, touching words, which vary in tone and expression almost every evening. Charlotte is mistress in light jesting, mistress in exalted tragedy. It is impossible to say whether the passions and feelings which she portrays rule over her, or whether she controls them. The intelligent comprehension and appreciation of her role, her plastic art, even in her most passionate moments, all this, with a certificate of baptism showing but eighteen springs; truly, he who does not believe in inborn genius will never comprehend true art."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a young man, dressed like a student, a small round hat upon his head. No sooner was he recognised than at every table the guests commenced singing the popular air, "On the Rhine, on the Rhine, there grow our grapes."

The new comer was no other than Matthias Claudius, the people's poet, who was a tutor in Wandsbeck, and often visited the wine-shop of "Obergesellschaft."

The actors joined heartily in the song, and greeted with full glasses the author of the *Weinlied*, and received him cordially into their circle.

"How goes it?" cried Brockman, across the table. "It has been a long time since we saw you at Hamburg. Have the poets or the muses, or has some beautiful, modest Phyllis kept you away from us?"

Claudius shook his head, smiling. "Neither the one or the other; I have been preparing myself to earn my bread."

"That is pitiful," sighed Bode. "You Englishmen are more fortunate," said he, turning towards Lord Elkins and his tutor. "In England the talented poet is not obliged to beg humbly for his bread before the palace gates; that great nation supports and honors its authors."

Elkins was about to reply when a hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned and saw his friend the Danish major, Max von Sylberg, before him. They greeted each other warmly.

The major was especially cordial. He was a stately, handsome man, more than thirty years of age. He expressed great delight at this unexpected meeting with his friend Elkins, and said to him :

“It has been three years since you left Tranquebar and returned to England. Six months later I followed you to Europe. My regiment was unexpectedly called away from the colony and garrisoned at Schleswig. On the banks of the Ganges we have rejoiced together over the sweet palm wine; we will drink a glass of old Rhine wine on the borders of the beautiful Elbe, to celebrate our unexpected meeting.”

Elkins presented Major Sylberg to his friends, and at Bode's invitation he took his place amongst them. His agreeable exterior and elegant manners assured him a favorable reception; his quick intellect and unconstrained gaiety made him a welcome guest in this merry circle, and his pictures of life in India made him interesting to all his hearers.

All difference of rank seemed forgotten, and even the dislike generally felt in Hamburg to the Danish officers was soon changed into kindly consideration when Sylberg, in the course of the conversation, made known his admiration for the theatre, and spoke of music as well as the stage with a true appreciation of both.

It was about eleven o'clock, most of the guests had withdrawn, the lights upon most of the tables were extinguished, and Herr Klefeker was snoring away lustily. At the actors' table the merry laugh and jest still resounded; suddenly, in the obscure part of the room, a hideous old negro appeared; he was wrapped in a black mantle, and drew near the gay circle like a midnight phantom. He cast an oblique, suspicious glance around the table, and whispered a few words in the Major's ear.

“Good, Olaf; I'm coming,” and the negro withdrew. Sylberg arose and said, with marked embarrassment, that his service called him to Altona. He took a graceful leave of all, gave thanks for the agreeable evening, and asked permission to join the merry circle in future, which was gladly granted. Bode

and the two Englishmen accompanied him to Millerthor; and only Eckhof, Broekman, and Koch remained. They ordered a bowl of punch, declaring that "In wine there was truth, but in punch there was illumination." Under the influence of this smoking, flaming beverage they were soon in high spirits, except Eckhof—he was always abstinent.

Absent minded and thoughtful he sat, with his hands clasped around the warm glass, looking silently before him. He roused himself suddenly from his abstraction, and said, as if talking to himself:

"I cannot abide that man! That fatal twitching at the corners of the mouth! that overstrained gaiety! that restless, frightened glance when he forgets himself! Say what you will, I am a dolt and have no knowledge of character if this Dane is not an altogether different man from that which he has chosen to appear this evening. There is a cruel egotism about him which ——"

"What have you against him?" said Brockman, with surprise.

"Against him! Oh, nothing! But I could cudgel myself, because of this wicked glance of mine, which compels me to see behind this manly, handsome face the ugly, hateful reality. I have, become, in pure comedian frenzy become a seer, and the most successful mask cannot conceal from me the secret recesses in which a man seeks to hide himself. This Sylberg, what has he done to me that whenever I looked at him the most terrible thoughts and suspicions oppressed me? My eyes followed involuntarily the magnificent diamond in his seal ring, and it seemed to me the eye of a basilisk. The man has been in India, and he jests and laughs at the slave trade with '*such humor*;' is merry over the sufferings of degraded humanity, and the next moment he is sentimental over Gluck's Iphigenia and Piccini's Olympiad!

"Children, I tell you, keep out of that man's way! Enthusiasm for art may be studied as well as the laws of trade. So, when he next does us the honor, avoid him."

With these words, he rose, passed his hat over his brow, and left the room. His friends looked at each other, shook their heads, and said, "Let him alone; he would not be the great tragic actor Eckhof if he were not always studying character. It is his trade to be on the track of the devil with all his masks and mimes; it is not of much consequence whether he sees him in his true light or with the eyes of fancy. Like a bee after honey, he is seeking continually for knowledge of human nature and—"

"Comes generally home gloomy and a hypochondriac," cried Brockman, laughing; and they both emptied their glasses to the health of Sylberg's psychological interpreter.

CHAPTER VI.

AMONGST the splendid country seats of the patrician world of Hamburg was also to be seen the charming little villa of Dr. Unzer. Surrounded by a beautiful garden, it lay upon the banks of the river Alster.

Dr. Unzer is already known to us as the intimate friend and physician of the Ackerman family.

The doctor had occupied this charming residence ever since he removed from Altona to Hamburg. It was not far removed from the city, but he enjoyed here all the pleasures of a country home; he was with his whole soul a physician, and consecrated himself to his profession, but his nature was poetic and he was devoted also to art and a high order of literature.

Notwithstanding his youth, he was a talented and experienced physician; he was rich, independent, and not without ambition; he was devoted to the theatre, and, as we have said, intimate with the Ackermans.

It was a lovely afternoon; Unzer had dined with his mother, who lived at Steinweg with a married daughter, then returned to his home, where he expected a few friends, amongst them Lord Elkins, to coffee. The coffee-table was served in an elegant parterre saloon, from which a glass door opened into a beautiful veranda covered with vine leaves. A splendid silver waiter was covered with peaches, melons, and superb grapes, arranged artistically with fragrant southern flowers; salmon, cheese, port wine, &c., were also at hand.

Unzer lighted the wax taper and placed the Habanas upon the table, then, with a cigar in his mouth, he entered the garden to meet and welcome his friends.

Already the soft, perfumed evening dew was sinking upon land and stream; the waves of the Alster were flashing and dancing magically under the rays of the setting sun. Unzer gazed around upon the enchanting landscape, and involuntarily

a remark of Charlotte's came to his memory. She had been, a few days before, at his house with his mother, and declared that the lovely region reminded her of a picture of Ruisdael's.

"She also prefers the autumn to all other seasons, and she is right, as always," said he, smiling.

"Only in autumn do we experience the mysterious powers of nature directly within ourselves. Fancy and imagination seem in unison with the outer world, a thousand new thoughts are awakened in us, the eyes of the soul are sharpened, every lovely object in nature seems doubly enchanting and mysterious, because near the borders of the grave. Like the last glance and the last hand-clasp of the dying friend, they are not to be forgotten."

"This comes of being a dreamer," said a well-known voice behind him. Unzer turned suddenly and saw Bode before him, pointing smilingly to three gentlemen who stood upon the veranda, Lord Elkins, Mr. Hill, with a stranger, whom Bode announced as Major von Sylberg, a "friend of Elkins, who wished to make the Doctor's acquaintance."

They returned rapidly to the house, and Elkins introduced the Baron.

"I know that you will consider my friends as yours. Allow me then to present Baron Sylberg, a man for whom I have the highest consideration, and to whose friendship I am indebted for a great service."

Unzer looked at the Major steadily for a moment, and then exclaimed, "If I am not mistaken, Herr Baron, we have met before; two years ago, at the house of Freiheern von Schimmelman, in Weinsbeck."

"Just so!" said Sylberg, hastily. Had any one observed him closely, his confusion could not have escaped their notice.

"There was quite a large company assembled on a fete day," said the Major, "and an introduction of the guests was neglected."

"We all know that Schimmelman is no friend to ceremony,"

replied Unzer. "But come, gentlemen, you must remember that I am a bachelor, but I hope to take care of you."

He took the Major's arm, and they entered the saloon. Soon the little circle was seated at the coffee-table, enveloped in smoke and enjoying the fragrant drink of the Levant.

Sylberg's intellectual nature was in harmony with Unzer's. The Major was more animated, more unconstrained than the evening before, and his views of art, life and history, portrayed the man of mind, experience and education; he had seen much, read much; he had a happy talent of painting attractively whatever was worthy of notice, and the rare tact of never placing himself in the foreground. He made no secret of the fact that he lived in the present, seized the happy moment when offered him, without long, tedious moral scruples; his principles with regard to women were not worse than those entertained at that time by men of standing and education. On the subject of love he made himself merry, but he was an eloquent and ardent defender of love adventures and fleeting inclinations.

"I have tried women of all sorts; the brown bayaderes of Yanshaur, the slender blondes of Copenhagen; I have deceived and been deceived by them; I have been in love with the one, been betrayed by the other, and through all this experience my principle remains the same, that the most beautiful and the most virtuous woman has no right to demand that I should marry her because she has had the happiness or the misfortune to please my taste.

"Who will go my security that I shall not find a lovely creature, to-morrow, who will cast all the idols of my former life in the shade; that I shall not feel a passion more ardent than any I have ever even dreamed of? The woman did not eat of the tree of knowledge for nought. Like her we must seek, but never suppose that we have found."

"Beware of such unsubstantial, airy principles, dear Baron," said Bode; "it is precisely the most fickle butterflies who fall into the net. At all events, it is a well known fact that women

generally aim at those men who make a virtue of inconstancy. Love is more subtle than art; many who mock at and deride its power bow their proud necks, in the next moment, under its yoke, and thank God humbly if they may only be allowed to bear it."

"Where can Schröder be?" said Unzer, to whom the conversation did not seem to be agreeable.

"Are you expecting Schröder? I think he will not come. He met me a short time ago, and his head was full of business cares. He scarcely had time to tell me the conclusion of Charlotte's romantic adventure in Kugelsort. The child to whom she was so pitiful has suddenly disappeared. Yesterday, a strange gentleman, accompanied by one of the police, took it away. The hostess cannot be brought to any sort of disclosure on the subject, and the Ackermans have sought in vain for any trace of the little deserter."

This news excited the surprise of all present. Unzer particularly asked many minute questions.

The Major heard for the first time the history of the child, and said, laughing—

"I think there is nothing mysterious in this affair. The child has no doubt been taken away by its father."

"You are mistaken. The day on which the child was taken away, Charlotte received a note from an unknown hand, which informed her that the orphan had found a protector, who would take care of its future existence and educate it carefully. The unknown benefactor closed with the assurance that, later, Charlotte should receive the child."

"I have never seen 'The Ackerman,'" said the Major, blowing a cloud of smoke before him. When I was on service in Hamburg the company was absent. Tell me, is this young lady accessible? In Copenhagen and Schleswig I was questioned about her in every social circle, and the world was amazed. They declared I had been in Rome and had not seen the pope. Is she really so beautiful?"

"Beautiful!" said Bode, looking up in surprise; "who told you that?"

"What," cried Elkins, warmly; "you doubt if the Rutland, the Emilie Galotti, the Oldfield, the Marie, is not the most lovely, the most enchanting creature, that a woman can possibly be?"

"And yet," said Bode, "I think no man will declare Charlotte Ackerman to be beautiful. There are people whose forms are unattractive, whose features are irregular, but whose eyes—— Why should I, an old man, be betrayed into ecstasies over the eyes of a young actress—only he who has once seen them can never forget them!"

"Yes, she is beautiful," said Mr. Hill, zealously, "perhaps not always equally beautiful. In her glance, what dreamy lustre; in her smile, what fascination; in her gravity, what thoughtful depth. No, Bode, if Mademoiselle Ackerman is not beautiful, then must Helen also be rejected."

"Ah!" cried the major, a goddess and three Parisians! This must indeed be a rare and peculiar beauty. And you, Unzer, what is your opinion?" Sylberg turned towards the doctor, but found his chair empty. He had risen during the conversation, seemingly to light a taper. At first he seemed not to hear the major's question. But when it was repeated, and Sylberg added, "First, beautiful without condition; secondly, not beautiful; thirdly, beautiful, with a distinction. Nothing remains now but a *fourth*. Shall we say ugly? Eh? Herr Doctor, is the wax taper the only light which can illuminate this problematical mystery?"

"It seems to be so," replied Unzer, turning around with a quiet smile to the light. After a moment's pause, he said gravely: "Perhaps each of the gentlemen is right. When I affirm that Charlotte is a beauty, I mean to say that the ethereal body of her spirit, the inborn grace, which breathes from her earthly form, and the quickening voice of her soul, is beautiful. No painter has ever been able to take her portrait. Perhaps

the soul will not allow itself to be painted. The soul is itself the best painter of such a countenance."

"I call that the answer of an augur," cried Bode. "God knows I love the girl as if she was my own child, but she cannot bear a comparison with her sister Dorothea."

"But Dorothea is never prettier than when seen by her sister's side," said the doctor, and a slight color flitted over his pale face.

"How plastic, how romantic!" exclaimed Mr. Hill.

"He who will pass sentence upon beauty," said the baron, "must first of all define the eye with which he regards it, and that is even as difficult as a description of beauty itself; a man can only be answerable for his own taste. I am therefore doubly anxious to see this little Sphinx with my own eyes; but her appearance upon the stage will not satisfy me. I must see her in a salon, promenading, in the church."

"Well, you are now at the right source for that," said Bode, pointing to the doctor. "He is the hen in the basket at Ackerman's."

"Yes, you shall see Charlotte to-day, if you will," said Unser, promptly. "She will visit my mother this evening, and I will take you there, *en famille*, and introduce you."

"How, you will?"

"Make an opportunity for you to form your own judgment of our young artist. It is true," said he, with a light touch of irony, "she is not what is generally called accessible; on the contrary, it is somewhat difficult to make her acquaintance; with strangers she is stiff and reserved in a high degree. This is one of her peculiarities, which is not in harmony with her nature. In the circle of her intimate friends she is simple and cordial."

"We shall see," said the major, and pressed Unser's hand thankfully.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the same Sunday afternoon, Charlotte, allured by the mild autumn sun, was walking to and fro in the garden, lost in deep thought. There were many beautiful fall flowers still in bloom. The purple gilliflower mixed its sweet fragrance with the mignonettes ; around the proud asters, glittered the little humming bird, now here, now there, shooting about like lightning, so quickly that the eye could scarcely follow its movements ; the graceful creature seemed to give itself up freely, in the little sunny garden, to the full enjoyment of its short summer life. Charlotte watched its charming movements with delight.

“ Oh ! you picture of human life, light-winged weather-cock,” said she, thoughtfully ; “ so, the spirit’s dreams, the soul’s great longings lead us here and there, almost aimless, no sooner found than lost ; now fluttering around this, now that flower of hope ; always in seeming sunshine, never in interior content ; suddenly, the first cold, winter frost destroys not only the bloom of hope, but the heart’s glad emotions. Oh ! my Creator, grant that I may not outlive this death, this winter of a wholly desolate heart !

“ Better to depart to the other side, still in possession of youth and its glorious dreams ; better even now, the cup of forgetfulness, than later, when life itself has taught us to forget, through painful self-denial and disappointment.

“ Ah, ’t is gone,” said she, rousing herself from the train of thought so little suited to her youth, and looking around in vain for the little bird, whose light humming was nowhere to be heard. Nothing but the light whispers of the yellow leaves of the old elm, now disturbed the sunny silence.

A change had come over Charlotte in the last few weeks, which was unaccountable to herself ; she was oppressed and anxious, as if possessed by some invisible and evil power. In vain she

sought to discover what had so influenced her character ; her gay, unrestrained mood, her happy temper, the power with which she had seized instantaneously upon the wealth, the essence of her art, and entered into the very soul of the author, had deserted her ; she seemed to be walking in a strange world, and sometimes she even distrusted her genius.

“ The Rutland has certainly affected me,” said she, while musing upon the change in her character ; and, in reality, she could date her altered mood from the time in which she had studied that role so suited to her passionate nature. With all the ardor of her rich imagination, she had thrown herself so profoundly into the circumstances, into the soul of this sorrowful woman, that she at last became Rutland, her very self ; and when she roused up and looked around her, the world about her seemed strange.

The love and grief of an unhappy woman had taken possession of her, and overpowered her own nature ; Rutland’s tragic fate had separated her from her own happy youth, and for the first time she had a dark foreboding that the tragic events which crushed her on the stage, had an existence outside of the kingdom of romance and poetry, and might come home to her in real life.

With this misgiving, came also the conviction, that her art, to which she had heretofore given herself up with such enthusiasm, could not afford the last and best satisfaction to a soul so ardent, so sensitive as her own ; that to every true life must belong something more than the fleeting illusions of fancy, that sorrow and gladness must not fail in this existence, if we would experience its greatest charm.

These confused impressions oppressed her. She had enjoyed the triumph of her art in its fullness, but her heart remained empty and lonely ; like the priestess, who sees God only in self-denial.

“ Renunciation,” said she, thoughtfully, “ yes, it may well be that there is something great and holy in this world, which can only be realized by self-denial. Yes, he who would mount the

giddy, dizzy heights of life, must throw aside every weight, and hold fast to the ice glaciers, with bloody feet, if need be.

“Art is a stern goddess, and the fire with which I will adorn her altar, shall never glow a living flame in my heart. My tears are deceit; my rapture is a lie.

“Like the song of the nightingale, made captive by cruel hand, singing of forest air and springtime, of moonlight and fragrance of sweet flowers. Oh Rutland, Rutland, you were once loving and happy in the still silence of your heart, before that heart was broken. Even the poor woman on Kugelsort perhaps did not die in vain. Alas! a tragic fate is not always necessary to seal the consecration of true love. Without the dagger of Odoardo, a noble heart can break.”

Charlotte had now reached the spot over which the old elm stretched its branches. In summer, this was a kindly shady retreat, and the family and their intimate friends generally assembled here. Art had also assisted to adorn the spot: a marble statue was placed under the elm before the beautiful syringas. It was a youthful sleeping form, perhaps the Hypnos of the old Greeks. The figure was standing, but the elbows were placed upon a broken column and the head supported slumbering upon one hand. The column was crowned with a lion's head, as a sign that sleep vanquishes all things. The other hand held three poppy heads.

This statue of Hypnos was an unalienable treasure in the family, and from her childhood Charlotte had been in love with its still soft beauty.

To-day a yellow leaf from the old elm had been swept down upon his head, and the lion's skin was also crowned with the leaves.

Charlotte gazed at it silently, and said in sad tones: “Now the autumn lays his yellow leaves in your locks and you know it not, you blessed dreaming Hypnos! Oh, that I now resembled you as formerly! those happy dreams, in winter, in spring, in autumn, in summer. The gods have given you everlasting youth; they also know nothing of life's sufferings and

changes. Only when men put away their golden dreams, do they see clearly. But the light is hostile, and the gay world of youth soon vanishes. You, Hypnos, sleep on and on, but the quiet smile upon your slumbering features plainly shows, that your godlike sleep is dearer than our waking.

"Sleep, sleep on, faithful friend of my childhood, and dream of the blessed vanished time. No rude hand disturbs your sweet slumbers! you are mine and I will guard you."

It would be a great mistake to suppose that, because Charlotte yielded sometimes to this grave mood, she was generally of a melancholy and sentimental character; she was by nature gay and genial; she was variable, and her sparkling genius sprang suddenly from one extreme to another. A slight cause was often sufficient to change her saddest, tenderest mood to childish mirth. Her lively temperament and excitable feeling rarely subsided into a calm and quiet mood; and she, who, on the stage in her most passionate scenes, preserved an artistic composure, was in real life the sport of the most contradictory emotions. In other words, Charlotte was a true artist, open to every impression, and in joy and sorrow alike immoderate.

A creative fancy cast at one moment its golden rays of paradise, at another its darkest storm-shadows over this gifted nature. That her constant intercourse with art in its many forms, and her glowing thirst for perfection should excite yet more both intellect and feeling, is easy to comprehend. The frail form seemed too fragile for the stormy spirit, the chords of the heart too fine for the discords of our struggling life; but that which appeared to exhaust her and disturb the scarcely unclosed organs of her physical nature, was the basis of her truth and strength. The fresh young soul drank from the fountain of her enthusiasm life, strength and nourishment.

Play what role she would, and the greatest beauties of her time, adorned with the rarest art and most costly splendor, were overshadowed by her. She only was seen. A few words,—one tone of her voice,—and you were won, chained for the evening. She made the same impression, if she sang, played,

danced. She seized with fire and flame upon every object—was enthusiastic for all. What she was, she was wholly. How strikingly true this picture drawn by one of her contemporaries is, may be seen by her portraiture of Rutland.

We will now accompany her, with her sister Dorothea, to the house of the widowed mother of Doctor Unser.

CHAPTER VIII.

“THE Old Frau,” as she was generally called in the circle of her friends and acquaintances, was one of the most interesting ladies in Hamburg; and her social circle, in name, talent, and cultivation, was one of the most select in the great city. Her house was not adorned with costly splendor. It was, on the contrary, of patriarchal simplicity, and her guests were chosen for their own personal merit. The purse-proud merchant and the silly fine lady avoided her threshold. Many shrugged their shoulders over the intellectual society, and the old Frau’s love for poets, authors, and artists; but she loved her enemies, and called down blessings upon them in sincerity and truth as long as they left her in peace. She was an angel of goodness and mercy, and divided her life between the cultivation of the beautiful and active charities. She was the mother of the poor orphan, the friend and comfort of the oppressed; and her name was blessed in the houses of the sick and the needy, and God, who judges not by the outward profession, but by the heart-life, heard the prayers of suffering and grateful humanity, and granted her a sunny evening of life; her harvest stood around her in rich sheaves.

Inexorable death had torn from her side her adored husband, and inexorable life had removed her glorious Lessing—her pride and favorite—from her sight; but even distance and the grave could not separate a believing heart like hers from what had once formed its joy and gladness, and she held fast with unchanging constancy to their remembrance.

In her fine classic features, in spite of the silver hair, the glorious light of youth still shone. The intelligent brown eyes, in a maiden of eighteen, would have kindled every heart; the marks of age and experience which were graven upon her face bore so mild an expression, that an observer of human nature would know that in this kindly heart only those wounds were

bleeding which belonged to life's higher consecration. The *source* of grief, because of lost happiness, murmured so softly through this beautiful soul, full of harmony and sensibility, that it reflected the lovely flowers of youth and made her society almost a necessity to many friends.

This was Unzer's mother, and if ever a mother's heart was devoted to an only son, hers was to our friend the doctor. He was worthy of such a mother; he loved his art for her; his knowledge received its consecration through the dear name of Mother; he became, it is true, a physician from sincere preference; but his mother had spoken the richest blessing over his profession, in saying, "I need a son for a physician for my poor;" and thus the question was settled.

Charlotte Ackerman, the eighteen year old maiden, was the bosom friend of the old Frau of sixty.

This was a rare friendship; a union of true hearts and souls. The old Frau often said jestingly, that she was convinced Charlotte would not marry before her death; and then Charlotte would declare, "You, Sophie, will not leave the world till I am dead."

Charlotte had taken Lessing's place in the heart of the old Frau; her dear Lessing, who lay sick and suffering in Boifentbettel.

On this afternoon, it seemed for a long time, as if Charlotte and Dorothea were to be the only guests; and the three ladies sat in the little saloon, in gay and confidential conversation; the fire had been lighted for the first time that season; Charlotte laughed and jested with her friend, and Dorothea prepared the tea. The servant entered, and announced that the Doctor would present Major von Sylberg to the ladies, during the evening. "Sylberg?" said the old Frau; "how came Karl by this acquaintance?"

"I do not know him," said Dorothea, without observing the surprise of the old Frau.

"I also do not know him," said she, thoughtfully; "some-

body has told me something about him, I cannot remember who, but it was a curious history.

"The Countess Linden kron had some connection with a Danish or Schleswig officer of this name, which gave occasion to a strange rumor. It was even said, that the Count, her husband, had fired a pistol at him from his deathbed. But this must certainly have been another of the name," said she, recovering herself; "Karl does not form a friendship for any man, without having full security for his character."

"And, above all, with a Danish officer," said Charlotte.

"But a name alone has its influence," said the old Frau; "I cannot bear this man, simply because he is called Sylberg."

"The name is often half the man," said Dorothea; "at least it often happens to me, that when I hear an unknown person mentioned, the sound of the name alone, suffices to bring them before me. This Sylberg, for instance, has a crisp beard, fiery eyes, a knightly figure, and speaks fast with a grating accent."

"Admirable! And wears spurs, clanks his sabre, and has a white feather in his hat," cried Charlotte, laughing; "exactly like a hundred other Danish officers."

"No, dear Dorta, I do not attach much importance to your 'magic of a name.' I know some most agreeable people with very horrible names; just think, now, of the difference between the name of our Klopstock, and his charming self; I know others with most musical names, who are sad figures. The name is only something when we know the man."

At this moment the door opened, and the Doctor introduced the stranger. The widow cast a piercing glance upon the stately, handsome man, with the open, intellectual countenance, and the cloud of doubt disappeared at once from her countenance. She welcomed the Major with marked cordiality; presented him to her two young friends; and offered him a seat. The Baron was soon at ease in the little circle, and behaved like a man susceptible of the kindest influences of life, and worthy of a place in the most confidential family circle.

He soon won the favor of the old Frau, who judged men

quickly and simply, and was almost charmed when a stranger felt at home in her house. She interested herself particularly in strange lands and customs; had a small cabinet with foreign rarities and art treasures; and he who wished to make himself acceptable to her, need only enrich her museum with some contribution and her affection was secured. She was more than happy, then, when the major promised her many rarities of Indian art and industry, and, amongst them, a complete toilette of a young Indian dancer of the temple of Brahmin, which he had brought from Tranquebar. This led to a conversation upon travel and its influence upon the individuality of man, during which the major developed sound and independent views. He said, amongst other things, "Travelling is but rarely the source of knowledge. Many men travel through half the world and return knowing only what every school-boy has learned from his books. It is said that travel educates and gives a determined stamp to the character. I have generally found that much travel clouds the intellect and weakens the character. He who is nothing or does nothing at home, will not probably be improved by foreign lands. We are only misled by the halo with which we are resolved to surround the traveller."

The doctor now took part in the conversation, and said: "This may be generally the case, but there are interesting exceptions. There are men who attain intellectual eminence by travel. I do not mean to illustrate by the Jews, whom God left to travel forty years in the wilderness, that they might become wiser and better; but think on the colossal character and iron will of the early settlers of America, who wandered for many years through the boundless deserts, with their guns on their shoulders, pressing onward into regions where culture and civilization did not take root for a century."

"That is altogether a different case," replied the major. "In those vast deserts travelling loses its prosaic character, and the wild romance of an unknown world enlarges and animates the heart and mind of those who follow her traces. How much of the fiery poetry of nature lies in the nomadic tribes! On the

contrary, the English who are the greatest travellers amongst educated nations, are the strongest representatives of cool egotism and stereotyped pedantry. As to myself, my lively remembrances of India are far more charming, more material, and more suggestive than my actual residence in those lands in which we willingly lay aside our poetical cradle-dreams, and our imaginations are more benumbed than excited."

"I agree with you," said Charlotte, "though my experience is confined wholly to my art circle. Those actors who fly through the world like birds in the air, have lost their individuality, and are, for the most part, superficial upon the stage as in real life. They have not learned to observe, and do not know, the just relation of life to art. In short, such an actor appears to me like a travelling merchant, who carries his samples with him, and in his leisure hours plays the flute. In all their jests and manners, and in their declamation, you recognise the everlasting traveller; even the routine is at last polished away, and nothing remains of the actor but his passport."

"The worst of all," said the major, "is that in travelling you rarely see what is most worthy of observation. For instance, I know a man who has been many times in Hamburg, who is a great friend of the theatre, and has never had the happiness of seeing the two sisters Ackerman upon the stage."

"The man is himself, perhaps, a great actor," said Charlotte, laughing ironically.

"Perhaps you are right," said Sylberg, quickly; "at least fate has often placed in the repertoire difficult roles for him to play, which he has carried through successfully."

He looked at her quietly and, it seemed to Charlotte, sadly; and one of those strange pauses ensued in the conversation in which each one present waits for another to recommence.

The adroit Charlotte found first the happy word, and as if she had not heard the Major's last speech, she resumed the previous subject of conversation.

"But that everlasting sitting at home is also injurious, con-

tracts and relaxes the intellect, and prevents a man from ever advancing out of his own small sphere.

“Life may indeed be likened to a long journey, so that the man who has never left his chimney corner may comfort himself with the comparison. There are, in all long journeys, charming contrasts, and we are glad to leave the weary, monotonous high road of common life and custom to wander in shady green woods and enchanting valleys, then return with renewed strength of body and soul to the clumsy stage coach of existence.”

“We are talking continually of journeys, and forget that we have in our midst a renowned traveller,” said the widow. No, no! you shall not thus escape us, Herr Sylberg! You must, at least, tell us some of your wild experiences in India; and that you may not be delayed in selecting, I propose that you tell us something of the dancing girls. They will in future, because of your generous present, have a double interest for me.”

The Major was visibly surprised at this request, and replied:

“How! Shall I tell you of the dancing girls? That was exactly my original intention. I will relate the story of an Indian love which, in poesy, is not inferior to the ‘Sakontala,’ though my history is not like that celebrated Indian love story, connected with unearthly beings. It will prove, however, that in those distant zones love has its tragic fatality even as here amongst civilized and sentimental Europeans.”

The Major now commenced his recital:

“During the last months of my residence in Tranquebar the Brahmins prepared to celebrate the great fête of the goddess Purucha, in their splendid pagoda.

“In former times, more than at present, this fête was celebrated with every possible pomp of Indian worship, and amidst other wild Indian orgies human sacrifices played no insignificant part.

“At present the exercises consist principally of purifications and penitential exercises, which the wise Brahmins, however, understand well how to conceal from the eyes of the curious Europeans.

“In olden time, in order to obtain the overthrow of an adversary, parents would sacrifice their children. Through their blood they hoped to bring the wrath of the goddess of revenge upon the head of their enemy

“The only custom which now remains of that gloomy worship is that of separating, during this fête, young maidens from their families, and dedicating them as living sacrifices to the goddess, either as means of reconciliation, or with the hope of obtaining some favor, just as in Catholic lands the convents are often filled with unwilling novices; a proof that fanaticism *silences* the voice of nature.

“These unhappy girls, whom the superstitions of their parents consecrate to the altars and give them up during life to the power of the goddess, or rather to the captivity of arrogant and unscrupulous priests, are generally the daughters of distinguished families, and the superstitious people of India honor them under the name of Devadasi, ‘consecrated,’ to distinguish them from those maidens who dance only in the pagodas before the gods on special occasions; who are known amongst us as ‘Bayaderes,’ and are not especially respected.

“Every Devadasi, however, is wholly consecrated to the temple service; they feed the holy flame upon the altar, cleanse the holy of holies of the pagoda, which the Brahmins alone dare enter, and accompany on all great occasions the solemn service with their holy dancing and hymns. They dwell in huts of bamboo, near the pagodas, where they observe steadily, in the midst of the vast population around them, a cloister life.

“No man dare approach them, and, thanks to the jealousy of the Brahmins, Europeans are most jealously watched and avoided. The rule of their order is to flee from and despise the stranger. Woe to the apostate who, even in appearance, disobeys this command; her life would close upon the funeral pile, the prey of Asuras (which signifies evil spirits), and her soul be condemned to wander upon the earth for thousands and thousands of years, in the body of a despised Pariah.

“The fête of Purucha had an especial interest for the officers of our garrison. It was almost the only opportunity to cast a glance upon the mysteries of the Indian worship; they counted 333 millions of gods, and their ceremonies were generally tragic spectacles.

“This year the fête had for the young officers a special significance. The fifteen year old Amany Tranquebars, wonder of beauty, was to be wedded to the god Perumala, and be received as the youngest Devadasi into the pagoda.

“Amany was the daughter of a rich Ephatrya, a caste next in honor and distinction to the Brahmins, because, according to mythology, they sprang from the arms of Brahma. Amany's father was the first merchant of the city; he was very rich, and considered by Europeans and natives a man of honesty and piety.

“The cause which moved him to consecrate his daughter to the temple service was peculiar, and significant of the religious superstition of the Hindoos.

“Two of his sons, just grown, were, while journeying through the country, fallen upon by murderous Thugs, and strangled.

“The unhappy father, robbed of his dearest hopes in life, saw in this calamity the wrath of the gods.

“The bloody sect of Thugs were looked upon by many pious Hindoos as the instruments of the vengeful god Schiva.

“The Ephatrya saw in the death of his two sons a sign of fate which commanded him to give his youngest and best beloved daughter to the temple service. By this holy act he hoped to rescue his other children from destruction.

“How much influence the cunning priests, attracted by Amany's beauty and her father's vast fortune, had in this result is not known, but it was generally understood that the Brahmins had used all their power to lead the superstitious old man to give up his child, and with her, a part of his wealth to the temple.

“Suffice it to say, that at the fête of the goddess Purucha, to which the faithful were hastening from far and near, the beau-

tiful Amany should be received as a Devadasi in the pagoda, and would dance, for the first time, before the public.

“After the solemn services had been solemnized in the interior of the pagoda, the officers, by special favor of the principal priest, were allowed to enter the court of the temple and witness the dancing of the Bayadères.

“We Danes, thanks to the wise and mild conduct of our government, are looked upon and treated with more sympathy and kindness by the natives than the English and French. We have had more influence upon the character and intellect of the Hindoos than they will ever gain, by their bloody wars and their cruel grasping policy.

“That portion of India which was subject to the Danish crown, in place of groaning under a foreign yoke, and dying out, was really prosperous, and the difference between the conquerors and the conquered was scarcely known.

“It was almost evening when we entered the court filled with countless numbers of spectators. Special seats to the left of the altar, adorned with flowers and rich draperies, were set apart for the governor and his officers.

“The whole Indian population of Tranquebar and the surrounding country was now assembled in the fore court of the temple, which was indeed large enough to contain three times as many men.

“Innumerable colored lamps, fastened on bamboo sticks around the altar, scattered a soft and fairy-like light, and illuminated with their dazzling rays the room strewn with silver sand, which was prepared for the dancers. In the back part of this room, near the principal door of the temple, an altar was erected, adorned with the most superb flowers of the Indian zone.

“All was glowing, splendid, glittering with many colors, and sweet incense filled the air. .

“Young Brahmins in white robes, with silver embroidered scarfs, stood in a half circle immovable about the altar. They

held white staffs in their hands, the tops of which were ornamented with blue lotos flowers.

“Deep silence reigned amongst the audience. From time to time the subdued song of the Brahmins was heard from the interior of the pagoda, with which, the melancholy notes of the Bayaderes was occasionally mingled.

“These holy and exalted sounds were intended to excite the devotion of the audience and prepare them for the hallowed dance.

“And now a confused and intoxicating music from cymbals, trumpets, and tomtoms made known the approach of the priests. A few moments later appeared the Brahmins in solemn procession, clothed in their most dazzling costumes.

“At their head was the great Priest Ramalingam, whose long silver beard stood out in striking relief against the copper color of his remarkable countenance. His brow was painted with white and blue lilies, symbolizing his exalted priestly rank; a polished sacrificial knife, the immemorial attribute of the Hindoo priest, hung on his breast, suspended to a chain of pearls, and gracefully wreathed with flowers.

“The Brahmins placed themselves on each side of the altar, and the musicians took their places behind them. And now the Bayaderes appeared, fifteen in number; the rarest beauties belonging to the temple service had been selected for this occasion—young, enchanting elfin forms, well calculated to enrapture and dazzle even the eyes accustomed to European salons—the oldest was not over fifteen; the youngest might be no more than ten. Soul, grace and dignity were expressed in every countenance, without betraying by a single glance that bold coquetry which usually distinguished their calling. A rich fantastic costume heightened still more the charm of their appearance; it was as dazzling as it was peculiar; a golden girdle was clasped around the slender waist, a white scarf wound around the bust like a serpent, and the yellow skin, smooth and lustrous, still glimmered here and there through its folds. Upon the head was a little cap of plaited gold, on which a seven-headed

serpent was engraved, this was the mark of the Devadasi; the arms were adorned with bracelets of gold, and small gold rings hung from the ears, the nose, and the lips; the hair lay flat upon the head, fell in two long plaits, and ended in circles of small bells; a gold band, set with dazzling stones, encircled the head. Around the neck hung an ornament in the form of a heart, a symbol of love.

“All the Bayaderes were carefully veiled, which was intended to signify their modesty and the jealousy of their invisible husband, the god Perumala.

“Shoulders and bosoms were concealed by a corsage of silk, embroidered in gold; and the long, dazzling white scarfs enveloped them from head to foot in charming mystery. Silk pants covered them to the ankles, and the small, coffee-brown feet were adorned with golden rings.

“Eyes black as ebony, whose wonderful language is only spoken by the Indian Bayadere, illumined these brown features, upon which the fire of youth was wedded to the soft calm and unspeakable sweetness of the oriental type. A modest, dreamy smile played upon their lips, contrasting charmingly with the sly, yet bold glance of other beauties, perhaps more dangerous to the European than to the Indian heart.

“As they stood before the altar, they bowed their heads even to their feet without bending the knee, and in rising they placed both hands upon the brow, accompanying this gracious greeting with soft smiles and glances.

“The dance began, which resembles our German—well, about as much as Germany resembles India.

“The Bayaderes dance with their whole bodies; eyes, head, arms, all dance, especially the eyes. Every step is poetry and grace. The whole religious fanaticism of this people is expressed in this dance, and every dance is a poem for them.

“Accompanied by the monotonous music, the dancers inspire the sleepy, dull people with life and fire, and the audience is carried away by the magic of their grace. They dance the passions which we feel.

“Intoxication seems to seize upon both priestesses and spectators, as, in a sort of delirious frenzy, they swing around in narrow circles. The feet resound upon the floor, the arms move wildly, the eyes glow, the lips open as if to utter cries of anguish; you become dizzy, and are obliged to close your eyes; but again and again the magic dance entices you, and you yield yourself to its wondrous influence.

“Wild, stormy, passionate, this weird dance is a mixture of voluptuousness and bashfulness, of allurements and maidenly reserve, of fanatical fury and fond trifling. In short, it is a history of the human heart in all its sympathies, attachments and feelings. It is called the ‘Malapu,’ or surprise-dance, and is a sort of wild, mad quadrille, with pantomimes, smiles, sighs, and indescribable language of the eyes. Sometimes a melancholy dirge wandered over the lips of the dancers, the same which resounds at midnight from the interior of the pagoda. Then the glance was more animated, more glowing; the eyes roll as if in madness, every muscle, every nerve trembles feverishly; the body seems almost to become vapor, and to be floated off by the air. They go, they come, advance, retreat. Sometimes the dance is grotesque; sometimes it embodies the rapture of love; sometimes, scorn and mockery; but it is ever full of life, of flame, of resignation. From time to time, a stroke of the castanet, then a piercing shriek, as if a soul had parted from its earthly tenement, and a god had borne it off triumphantly into the dark kingdom of shadows.

“Just then, a young girl sprang from the pagoda, pale, with dishevelled hair, and with every mark of terror and despair in her countenance.

“It is Amany, the bride of the god Perumala. She looks back often, as if pursued by an invisible enemy, then advances with flying feet, seeking protection at the altar, which she encircles three times, then sinks down at last, as if insensible, on the lowest step.

“Now she raised her arms imploringly to the Bayaderes, pray-

ing them to protect her, the closely pursued, from the terrible god. But, alas for her ! there was no rescue.

“The Bayaderes seemed inspired by Amany’s glance with the same agony of fear ; they also wished to fly—in vain—an invisible power chained their steps, and forced them back to Amany. If they could not defend her, they might at least hide her with their garments from the eyes of the formidable god.

“He who had never before seen this wondrous pantomime would be difficult to convince that it was all an illusion, a ceremony handed down from the olden times for the reception of a Devadasi. The whole scene was touching and effective, but the appearance of Amany engrossed all attention. The young officers particularly had eyes only for the young girl whose heavenly beauty cast all around her into shade.

“You will excuse me from any further description of this new Devadasi. Suffice it to say, that to-day, after the lapse of years, I cannot think without rapture and emotion, of this most lovely being, who embodied the poetry of India in every movement.

“The god Perumala was not disposed to relinquish this sweet priestess who had been consecrated to his service. His sharp eye soon discovered the terrified fugitive in spite of the veils with which her companions sought to conceal her. By these efforts she was for a few moments hidden from our eyes. Suddenly, upon some signal in the music, the Bayaderes withdrew, and Amany, as if touched by some enchanted wand, stood before us in the complete dress of a priestess, a metamorphosis which was received by the European part of the assembly with a cry of surprise.

“And now the Brahmins commenced a peculiar consecration hymn, and the principal priest placed the chain with the golden heart around the neck of the Devadasi. By this ceremony Amany was wedded irrevocably to the god Perumala.

“The dance began anew. The Bayaderes hastened to receive the chosen one in their midst, and tore her away from the altar.

“This was the bride dance, in which the Devadasi appeared for the first time openly before the Brahmins and the people as

a temple dancer. The other girls formed the choir, and by changing and fantastic groups they added to the pantomime. Amany surpassed them all, and enchanted the assembly by her grace and versatility. She did, indeed, deserve the name of 'Daughter of Air.' Her small brown feet were scarcely seen to touch the floor, only the melodious ring of the silver bells on her robe reminded us that she was aught but ether.

"And now I close my description of the fête of Purucha, and come back to my little story, in which, as you have no doubt supposed, the sweet Amany plays the principal part."

The Major here paused a moment as if to master some secret emotion, and then related to his eager hearers the following incidents of his life in India :

"We had been four years in Tranquebar when the king commanded a change of troops, and we were to return to Europe. This announcement was received by the officers and troops with shouts of joy, and we waited with lively impatience the arrival of the frigate *Medea*, which was to bring the new troops to Tranquebar.

"One of our officers, a lieutenant of artillery, a most talented and amiable young man, did not share in the general joy. Assman had been formerly the gayest of the gay, but now exhibited the greatest reserve and depression. His comrades soon suspected that from some mysterious cause his return to the fatherland was unwelcome. Assman was subjected to much raillery on the subject; in consequence of this he avoided the gay society of his friends, and was a complete enigma to them. At last, one of them received the explanation from his own lips, even the same who is now giving you this history.

"Amany, the sweet bride of the jealous god Perumala, had, on the evening of the fête of Perucha, kindled in the heart of Assman a flame of love; from the hour in which he saw her for the first time, he thought only of her.

"In the beginning he sought, but in vain, to struggle against this feeling. He saw the impossibility of obtaining the object of his wishes, even if Amany should return his affection.

“She was a priestess, consecrated to her god; a terrible gulf lay between them. The fanaticism of the Hindoo religion, whose rigid statutes no hand had ever touched and remained unpunished; the hundred Argus eyes of jealous, cunning Brahmins, who watched unceasingly over this costly pearl, some of these cherishing the secret wish of possessing Amany, for the priestesses could wed a Brahmin, notwithstanding their betrothal to a god, he being regarded as the representative of the heavenly husband.

“In spite of all these obstacles, and setting all personal danger aside, Assman dared the utmost, and after inconceivable difficulties succeeded in drawing near to Amany and declaring his love. He found his way to her hut, and great as was her horror at this unheard-of boldness, she could not resist the prayers of love from the lips of so handsome and knightly a soldier. She forgot her oath of consecration, and Assman had the supreme happiness of finding his love returned.

“Without having read Werther or the New Heloise, Amany was tender and sentimental; her heart was thirsting for love, and she entered into this romantic and dangerous adventure. After a short struggle she bravely resolved to fly to Europe, where neither the power of Brahma or his priests could follow her.

“With the certain death by fire before her eyes, if she was discovered, she wove the bridal wreath of odorous flowers for her beloved. Through this sign the Indian maiden betroths herself to the man of her heart.

“Under the protection of the kindly Cinnares, the genius of music, she sang nightly in her hut those sweet love songs with which the Devadasi breathes out at midnight her modest, pure passion to her chosen god.

“At these signals the happy bridegroom drew near to the sacred lake behind the pagoda, upon whose waters the soft light glanced dreamily. In the shadow of the fragrant elengis and azaleas he drank from the lips of Amany the immortal draught of love. In the twilight the Indian lark scattered her melo-

dious notes over the happy lovers, and spoke to the young Dane of his far distant northern home.

“I was no little frightened when Assman confided to me his heart’s secret, and with intoxicated words painted to me his love and his happiness. I knew the watchful jealousy of the Brahmins, and that the people in the zeal of their fanaticism had, in similar cases, often reached a double sacrifice.

“Not Amany alone, but my friend, was in imminent danger if this intercourse was discovered, and I thought it my duty to warn him gravely, and entreat him to be prudent.

“He promised me to be cautious, but I soon knew to the contrary. Blinded by love, and madly bold, he continued his secret intercourse with the Devadasi; and later, when it was Amany’s duty to keep up the altar fire, Assman dared to enter into the holy of holies of the temple, and this, too, in a land where the cowardly Thug never fails when he is resolved upon murder; where the Phansigar strangles his enemy in obedience to a religious law; where murder, under such circumstances, is considered an act of purification and repentance.

“This religion, which counts murder, robbery, and every sort of crime amongst its dogmas, this bold youth defied; dared to enter the temple, which no Christian had ever defiled, which was forbidden to the faithful Hindoo, unless he belonged to the priesthood!

“These pagodas are of a strange, gigantic, immeasurable architecture, in which every known style seems united. Hideous monsters are placed near statues of Hellenic beauty, and incense is burned, so sweet, so subtle, that the hair and clothing is perfumed for months; and wreaths of flowers are hung upon monstrous forms, which crouch upon stone elephants of gigantic size.

“Perumala’s altar, by which Amany watched every fifth night, lay upon the south side of the pagoda, and constituted the most splendid part of it. According to the Hindoo faith, the consecrated priestess committed an unpardonable sacrilege by allowing a degraded Christian to look in upon this sanctuary.

“The moonlight fell upon the uncovered courts of glimmering marble. A low door, guarded by two stone lions, the everlasting and immovable protectors of the altar, led into an arched vault, and this into a narrow passage, the roof of which was supported by marble pillars and splendidly carved. In the background a little stream trickled from the floor, and fell into an immense basin, which was surrounded by the most frightful stone images.

“In this dark sanctuary, the abode of terror and of beauty, the Bayaderes sometimes performed their solemn dance; here, in the olden time, the human sacrifices were offered up, and here the Brahmins, the first metaphysicians of the earth, meditated upon the teachings of their god Perucha, over ‘Being and not being,’ ‘Myself and not myself.’ Wisdom, murder, voluptuousness had all consecrated this spot.

“The altar stood by the side of the little lake adorned with the marble image of the god—a god as resplendently beautiful as the Grecian Apollo, whose face would have recalled the most enchanting ideal of Phidias, had he not possessed fifteen arms and three bodies, and his feet consisted of hideous lizards and serpents.

“This was the husband of the beautiful Amany, to whom she had been faithless, and yet she was compelled to nourish the holy fire, the symbol of constancy and faith, upon the hearth of ‘Kunda,’ to sprinkle the red flames with the oil of cocoa, and the walls with the consecrated water of the lake. Three times in the night, in the midst of fervent prayer, she waved the odorous incense, so that the outer vault and passages were filled with an overpowering smell of camphor. Even in the fresh air, the presence of a priest, or any servant of the temple, was betrayed by this powerful fragrance at a distance.

“Even here the audacious Assman forced an entrance, and sat for hours in the shadow by Amany, caressing her fondly, calm as if under jasmine and orange bowers.

“The plan for flight was carefully reconsidered. The governor himself was acquainted with all the circumstances; as soon

as the *Medea* arrived. Amany was to be secretly received on board. The arrangements were all completed, and the two lovers were only occupied with pictures of their future happiness.

"At last the cannon from the fort signalled the longed-for frigate. The troops were landed, and on the part of the military and the natives many festivities were arranged in their honor.

"A rich Brahmin by the name of Iaos, who traced his descent from the royal race of Tandschur, and who was often employed by the government in important negotiations with the neighboring Indian princes, wished on this occasion to show his attachment to the Europeans, and prepared, at his country seat on the sea shore, a splendid fête in honor of the departing officers. The most distinguished of the natives were also invited.

"It was the evening before the important day on which Amany, at nightfall, and dressed as a sailor, should escape from the pagoda and fly to the *Medea*.

"Many of Assman's friends were now acquainted with the affair, and congratulated him upon winning this wondrous flower of India.

"The romance of this love affair had interest and attraction even in this far distant zone, and all who knew the secret wished to aid in its successful result.

"Assman was one of the best beloved officers, and in case of necessity we would all willingly have placed ourselves at his disposal. It was then, certainly, not one of his confidants who betrayed his secret. I rather believe it was my friend himself, who forgot his usual prudence as the hour drew near in which his warmest wishes were to be fulfilled. Others supposed that the priesthood had known for a long time of the desecration of the temple, and it was certainly remarkable that at this great fête not one of the Brahmins who had been invited appeared. It was indeed possible that the peculiar odor of the incense used in the sanctuary betrayed the sacrilege to the fine noses of the suspicious Brahmins, and thus led to a complete discovery.

"In short, towards the conclusion of the fête, which extended

far into the night, just as the Indian jugglers commenced their arts, some one announced that the Pagoda was on fire. In reality a thick column of smoke rose up in dark and heavy masses from the interior of the pagoda. Of fire, however, there was nothing to be seen; a few sparks only were floating here and there in the midst of the smoke. Our host and the natives who were present hastened to the city, but the officers remained in the country house, and from an elevated point watched the pagoda anxiously. Suddenly, through the stillness of the night, a strange wild song was heard, whose weird tones accompanied with the mournful music of muffled instruments soon chained our attention completely, as there was, apparently, no danger of fire.

"The song came from the pagoda, but no one knew its significance; we believed it was some unknown church fête.

"Suddenly a messenger from the governor arrived breathless from the city, and announced that something horrible had happened, and that all Tranquebar was in a state of wild tumult.

"The Brahmins—oh, the horrible fanaticism!—had burned alive a young priestess of Perumala, whom they charged with the guilt of desecrating the temple.

"They had committed this crime (sanctified by their religion, but sternly forbidden by the Danish government), so secretly and so hastily, that the dark column of smoke and the death-song of the priests gave the first news in the city.

"You cannot conceive with what horror we heard this intelligence. No one doubted but that it was the beautiful Amany who had met this sad fate.

"Assman was like a madman, and in the first transports of his agony and despair, tried to throw himself into the sea.

"We hastened with him to the fort. The whole Indian population of Tranquebar was upon the point of taking up arms to protect their altars, which they supposed to be threatened by the Europeans.

"The prudence and wisdom of our governor succeeded at last in allaying this danger to the colony. He took no notice of the

fearful crime, and this revolting outbreak of Hindoo superstition remained unpunished.

“Our political relations with India were not at that time of the most promising character. A contest, therefore, with a frenzied priesthood was not to be thought of. We were compelled, therefore, to seem satisfied, and defer our revenge to a more favorable time.

“Even to this day the influence of civilization has not been sufficient to do away with this bloody worship in the English Indian colonies; and the burning of a widow, on the death of her husband, is still a custom—a fearful evidence of the barbarous religion of the Hindoo!

“Our fears with relation to Amany were confirmed on the following day. Of the nature of her crime we had no definite intelligence; probably the Brahmins did not consider it advisable to give publicity to this fearful sacrilege against their god. They feared to create a prejudice against their temple.

“That Amany’s love affair with the Danish officer was well known to the Brahmins, we soon received substantial proof, and this gave a mysterious and horrible conclusion to this tragic love story.

“As soon as my poor friend became convinced of this fearful truth, and could no longer doubt of the death of his beloved, brought about by his own fault, a deadly melancholy took possession of him, and his life became a burden. He rejected all consolation, and slighted every warning as to the revenge of the cunning Brahmins, who in like cases had sacrificed many Europeans.

“A short time before, a Calcutta journal had announced the murder of a young Spaniard, in consequence of a love adventure with a Bayadere.

“The frightful Thugs, those priests of the goddess Kalie, the enemy of the human race, who make murder a profession, were, at that time, throughout India, under the influence, and indeed in the service of the Brahmins, and their bloody worship inspired all hearts with terror. Woe to the unhappy one who

was chosen for a sacrifice ! He disappeared suddenly from the earth and left no trace behind. The Thug understood his trade to perfection. With a handkerchief called "Palu," he strangles his victim and leaves no blood stain, no sound escapes from the lips of the murdered man ; then the body is hid away so secretly, so surely, that even the hungry Paria hound could not find it.

"Most probably the unhappy Assman became the victim of the Thugs ; in no other way could his sudden disappearance be accounted for. He left the house, one evening, to go to the fort, but never reached it and never returned home. 'The Phansegar stepped on his shadow,' is the Hindoo proverb when a man vanishes and leaves no trace behind."

CHAPTER IX.

THE introduction of Major Sylberg into the artist circle of the "Obergesellschaft," as well as in the narrow home circle of Dr. Unzer, was not without effect. Eckhof's unfavorable judgment was not in accord with the good opinion entertained by his comrades.

The old Frau was pleased from the first moment of his acquaintance. By his agreeable manners and exterior Sylberg had dispersed the suspicious and romantic shadows which had cast a dark cloud over his past life. She was not satisfied, however, with her own good opinion of him, but sought through many channels to investigate the past, particularly his intercourse with the Countess Linden kron, before she trusted him fully. Her intimate acquaintance with influential persons gave her assurance of a definite result. She was led to this, not only by her caution as to the reputation of her house, but the man pleased her; she admired his sentiment and style of thought, and promised herself a new, animated, and charming element for her social evenings.

To her great satisfaction, all the information she obtained about the handsome officer, from Schleswig, was in his favor; even his countrymen who were in Hamburg, spoke of him with consideration.

As to the story connected with the Countess Linden kron much remained in darkness; but it was certain that the young widowed countess withdrew, immediately after the death of her husband, from Hamburg, and established herself upon her estate in Holstein. The probability was, that she would not return to the city during the winter.

The report, as to the enmity of the deceased Count to Sylberg, was pronounced utterly false. The Major had remained by his death-bed to the last moment, and manifested the most faithful affection.

“So is it with the world!” said the old Frau; and she was angry with herself for having given a moment’s belief to the vile scandals. “The brave Sylberg! It is only necessary to look into his frank, sincere eyes to know him well! He has, of course, like every other good man, his enemies. But stand aside, slanderers, I will not be blinded by your jealous abuse! The Baron shall be my friend.”

The old negro Olaf brought the Indian rarities which Sylberg had promised, and amongst them the full toilette of a Bayadere, made of the richest silk and embroidered with silver flowers.

A text from the holy “Veda” was worked in gold thread upon the girdle, and this was fastened by a light blue crystal, richly carved in the form of a camelia.

The widow felt the liveliest satisfaction at this addition to her little museum. She tried to detain the old negro, in spite of his repulsive appearance, and only released him after many questions as to his fatherland and his own fate, with a rich present. She was charmed with this misshaped, limping, cunning monster, because of his boundless love for his master. She placed a gold piece in his hand, and his tigerish eyes sparkled, and his feeble form, apparently bowed down by age, seemed to rejuvenate as if by magic; he shouted aloud, and sprang several feet in the air.

Immediately after this, the doctor’s carriage drove up, and he entered the little cabinet to give his mother a morning kiss. He found her occupied in arranging Sylberg’s presents.

The proportions and arrangements of this little room indicated her intelligent and poetical temperament.

The doctor glanced around admiringly, and declared that but one thing was wanting—a special guardian of her treasures, and free entrance to the public.

“Out with you,” cried his mother. “This is no museum for a curious world; it is my temple of friendship. That which makes these rarities dear to me is the thought that I have been remembered in China, in Greenland, in Tunis; a friend in Naples brought me this glorious Apollo, and this robe of many-

colored feathers was sent to me from the South Sea. So, talk to me no more of the public, but rather tell me what you have heard of our new friend, Baron Sylberg."

"I have just called upon him," said the doctor, "but he was out. The host of the 'Kaisershof' gave me good news of him, however. Sylberg is a man of the world, enjoys life, and his appearance indicates it, but he is, nevertheless, an amiable and excellent man. The host has scarcely words to declare what he does for the poor. Since the baron has been in his hotel it is never free from beggars, and the more he gives, the greater of course is the pressure. The hostess declares he is a child-lover, and plays often half the morning with her young ones. He leads a solid life, occupies himself with music, and he is only extravagant in fine horses, having three in the stable; he is an adroit and bold rider."

"So," said the old Frau, "benevolence is the target for slander. He who does more for his fellow-man than the pitiful shopkeeper can comprehend, is called a prodigal, and the world shrugs its shoulders over his Christian love, as if it was frivolity. Men are made angry by the exhibition of any virtue which they do not possess. From this time no one shall speak a word to me against this worthy man; but I must caution him as to his charities. I will tell him that a good man has a double duty to discharge in this world—to take care of his fortune and dispense it justly."

"You are completely fascinated by this Sylberg," said the doctor. "You yourself commissioned me to warn you of your credulity. Remember your Polish count and your silver spoon." "Still," cried the old Frau, angrily; "the man was a common adventurer and thief, and if I took him for something better" — "It was only a proof of your goodness of heart," said the doctor, softly caressing her cheek. "Do not be angry, dear Mamachen, it belongs to your noble character never to suspect men, although so many have rewarded you with ingratitude. I agree with you that we should cherish Baron Sylberg and hold him worthy of our friendship. I have broken a lance bravely

not long since at Ackerman's in his favor. Charlotte cannot endure him; she finds him—guess now, what she thinks of him."

"That he is too unreserved, too unconstrained?"

"Not at all!"

"Too chivalric, too aristocratic?"

"Not that!"

"Perhaps his appearance does not please her; he is too old, too grave?"

"No, nothing of this," said the Doctor; "she declares that the Major is too romantic, that his sentimentality has *pitfalls*—is defective."

"How like Charlotte! pitfalls in his sentimentality;" cried the old Frau, gaily.

"Dorothea, on the contrary, took his part," said the Doctor; "she had found him entertaining, she had seen but few men who combined such remarkable personal advantages with so much simplicity and amiability."

"Did Dorothea say that?" said the old Frau, with some confusion; "and yet she did not speak ten words to him during the evening."

"Does this appear so remarkable to you?" said the Doctor.

"Listen, Karl," said his mother, after a short pause, and in a changed voice, "there is nothing so remarkable as to Dorothea, but I am surprised that you repeat this with such cool composure. You know how she honors you, that she waits for but one word from your heart, to yield up to you her pure, beautiful and constant soul; and you, Karl, still hesitate to speak that little word, although you know that she is the most lovely and attractive of women."

"Dear mother, Dorothea has no more sincere friend than myself."

"Be silent!" said the old Frau, impatiently; "with all your sincere friendship for this gracious creature, you have been for six months opposing yourself to my soul's dearest wishes. Dorothea stands as helpless and hopeless before you as myself. As

if you did not know that she loved you with all the ardor of her sincere and honest heart. Oh, Karl! where are the eyes of your understanding, that you will not see this rare flower, so exactly constituted by Heaven for your happiness. If I dare once more question your heart, does your reason, your judgment sleep, that I must recall to you Dorothea Ackerman is the only woman on earth that is worthy of you, and of whom you are worthy?"

"Good heavens, dear mother! into what a strange discourse we are betrayed! You, who acknowledge Dorothea's worth even as I myself do, wish that reasons and cold conviction should lead me to take a step which the heart alone should prompt. Never can this be your wish, dear mamma! You have told me a thousand times that you would despise the man who did not follow the teachings of his heart in such cases."

"But when the heart is blind; when it does not suspect the happiness lying directly in its path, is it not a mother's duty to awaken it?"

"My heart is not blind," said Unzer, looking at his mother with emotion; "more awake, perhaps, than you think. The happiness which you point out to me is overshadowed by a more glorious happiness which blooms in my path, which, perhaps, protects me from the power of all other charms.

"You, dear mother, are blind, and will not see Dorothea, and yourself are basking in its glorious rays, and do not see how they have inflamed my heart. You look amazed, mother; can you not understand that I have a sincere affection for Dorothea, but that I love another passionately?"

"I do not understand you, dear Karl," said his mother, scarcely able to control herself; she did not know that this moment would perhaps decide over her heart's dearest wishes, her life's happiness.

The doctor seated himself by her side, and took her hand softly in his own.

"Do not look so grave and solemn. I cannot bear to see care written on your happy countenance. And why should it be

so? My heart has selected with your eyes! My choice is also that of your own heart! Yes, dear mother, not Dorothea, but Charlotte, is the worshipped object of my love, and if I have concealed this from you heretofore, it is because I wished to be first sure of my success."

"Charlotte!" said the old Frau, and passed her hand suddenly over her brow, as if the name was strange to her. "You love Charlotte Ackerman! My God, how does it happen that I hear this for the first time from you? What a strange misconception you have of this girl. Charlotte your wife! no! no! Do not speak, Karl; not now. I am too much excited; your declaration has amazed me too much. Charlotte and you!"

"Why are you so moved?" said the doctor. "Would not Charlotte insure to your son all that is lovely and attractive in life?"

"Charlotte is no wife for you," said his mother, in a mild but firm voice. "You are not suited to each other; your characters are dissimilar in every particular. That which enraptures you, which binds you to her now, would be the destruction of your wedded happiness. The peace of both would be irrecoverably lost.

"No, no!" exclaimed she, with clasped hands. "God, the Almighty, will not allow you to become one. That would be an unnatural alliance, which would consume two souls, and in place of melting them into one, would condemn yourself and the sweet girl to destruction."

Unzer was almost speechless at these words of his mother; he was utterly unprepared for this decision; her voice sounded almost hostile in its unwonted passion.

The mother felt that she had allowed herself to be carried too far. She saw terror in the features of her son, and pressing him fondly to her heart, she exclaimed: "Forgive me, Karl; I confess to you that your words made me forget myself. Let me think awhile; it is not well to hear and to decide so grave a subject in the same moment. I have said too much! All my thoughts and hopes have been fixed for a long time upon Doro-

thea. I had looked upon you as a happy pair. Your whole life lay like a sunny spring before me. Then you cross my path, suddenly, with your Charlotte. No! she can never be your wife, Karl! consider well, my son! Charlotte can never be any man's wife; she is an elf, a fairy child, a genius. Alas! your path to the altar would be your path to sure destruction!"

- "How is this, mother? Do you think Charlotte incapable of love? Name me one girl in Hamburg who has as much sensibility, who unites as much intellect and education with so much feminine grace and tenderness."

"And yet she is not suited to be your wife," said the mother obstinately. "Believe me, Karl, we women have a much surer judgment than men in all that relates to our calling as wives and mothers.

"You see in us, only yourselves; with your affections, your wishes, your ideals. Women judge women more truly. I have never seen a man suited to Charlotte, you not excepted; she has often confessed to me, that the most interesting and amiable man would become an object of indifference, perhaps dislike to her, so soon as she thought him in love with her. Only lately she said to me, she believed her art filled her heart and soul so completely, that any other sentiment or passion would make her wretched; that her inspiration could not live in harmony with any other love.

"And you, my son, wish to wed this girl whose whole being is given up to her profession, who knows nothing but her art; she shall deny her whole nature, and be content with new spheres, new duties, new claims. Think not of it, Karl! this sweet bird of Paradise is destined for the clouds; and when she touches the earth with her wings, it will be to her prejudice."

"Mother! mother! you are robbing me, by these words, of a great, rich hope," cried Unzer, with a gesture of anguish. "It is true it requires a brave heart to hope to obtain Charlotte's love; a great soul full of lovely enthusiasm; glorious love, a poetical nature to win and satisfy such a heart; but still, if that which seems so impossible to you, mother, and to me, should

come to pass ; if almighty love should work this wonder ; Charlotte should give herself, heart and soul, to a man, and that man should be your happy son Karl ; then, mother, what would you say ? ”

“ Simply, dear son,” said the old widow, greatly moved, “ simply I would say, be worthy of your great happiness ; and you, oh Heavenly Father ! grant its continuance.”

A pause ensued ; the old Frau turned to her flowers, a tear fell upon them ; alas ! years had passed since she had shed such tears.

She passed her hand hastily over her eyes, but the doctor had seen her emotion ; he sprang from his chair and clasped his mother passionately to his heart ; then, without a word, rushed from the room.

“ It is good that he goes,” said his mother ; “ by the beds of his patients he will find solace for his sorrows ; and perhaps the wise Charlotte may console him.

CHAPTER X.

It was a stormy night. In the midst of rushing, sighing winds and heavy snow-flakes stern winter held its course through the desolate and solitary streets of Hamburg, and dashed its frosty greeting in the face of a lonely wanderer who, wrapped in a horseman's cloak, strode rapidly from the great Newmarket towards St. Michel's church.

This was Sylberg, who had slipped away from the merry drinking circle at Dragonerstall, to seek his distant quarters in Kaisershof.

The boisterous mirth of his comrades, just arrived from Altona, was not in harmony with his present mood, and their rude raillery and mocking allusions to old times had greatly excited him. Between himself and a Holstein officer there had been a fierce strife of words, which, without the interference of calm, judicious friends, might have become bloody earnest.

Brawls and duels were the order of the day in the Holstein army. He who did not know how to quarrel and hector and fence was not considered a capable officer.

Sylberg's blood was heated by wine and strife, and the tempestuous night, with its black shadows and wild confused sounds, was welcome. The cold air from the great river soon cooled his feverish brow.

As the excitement of his soul subsided, those days which his comrades had so unseasonably recalled to him, rose up vividly before him. How many times had he wandered in the same wild winter weather through these streets, sometimes to a rendezvous, sometimes to a wine-cellar, or perhaps to both, as the moods and caprices of his passionate nature inclined him.

At that time he was almost a stranger in the great city, and cast himself without restraint into the wild whirlpool of dissipation; and he was soon known amongst men and women as a man who sought the gratification of his passions at every cost.

Sylberg belonged to that class of men amongst whom the most notorious orgies were not uncommon, and many even of this dissipated circle kept him at a distance.

This association, however, was limited, and consisted principally of strange officers, so that Sylberg's character and reputation remained, outwardly, untouched. In addition to this his prudence and inborn chivalric amiability stood him in good stead. He had chosen time and place so cautiously that his rank in society never came in conflict with his private life, and the first families in the city received him into their private circle.

Since he came the last time, as Danish recruiting officer, to Hamburg, he had indulged in no excess; he had, indeed, lost the taste for it, and without making any profound moral reflections he had said to himself, "that a mode of life so unbridled, so systematically dissipated, must cease at some time, if cool reason should ever wish to revert to the past without repentance."

Added to this, the direct occasion or pretence for his unbridled life had disappeared; this our future history will make clear. The old flames in his bosom had cooled off, or were glowing only in the depth of his soul. The crater of his passions had grown cold.

His quick, susceptible intellect found excitement enough in the enjoyments and interests of common life. The elasticity of his nature inclined him to a nobler existence. How much of truth and self-knowledge lay in this hope we will learn later.

As Sylberg strode through the streets these reminiscences rose up before him, and led to reflections over himself. He had been carried back that evening to his past life with all its faults and errors, and looked with a certain sort of satisfaction upon those days.

When he reached the large corner house to the right, where the "Holenweg" leads to the market, Sylberg's retrospection closed suddenly. He stood as if rooted to the ground, and stared at the old building whose windows were all closed.

A sound—half a sigh—half a curse—escaped from his convulsed breast; he stamped upon the pavement until his spurs clattered. At this moment, the moon burst from behind a riven cloud, and illuminated the house and the empty market-place.

“Oh, Linda,” he murmured gloomily, “you shall yet bow your proud head before me” He turned hastily, as if an invisible power of darkness or some black and bitter remembrance barred his advance, and hastened with flying feet from the “Hohlenweg” towards Steinweg.

“But why do I fly from you, mysterious shadow?” said he, moderating his steps and breathing heavily. “For a long time you have not been so hostile as before, and I can banish you in cool blood to the dark shores where you belong. Once truly I ran like a coward from before you in this same path by which I have fled to-day; but then you were flesh and blood, and called Arthur von Lindenkron. Now, you are dead,—but she lives—she, the traitress, the destroyer of my best feelings.

“And you, lovely Bertha, at that time my consolation, where are you now? You healed the burning wounds of my soul. Is this the way? Why should I not seek you?”

Notwithstanding the flight into which his recollections had driven him, there was so much of affected passion and sentiment in his last words, that he laughed over their fire and pathos. He entered the narrow street, and took his way towards Kugelsort.

Sylberg was curious to know what had become of Bertha. He had not thought of her for a year. In the olden time, when he visited the Lindenkrons, he turned his steps almost daily to Bertha’s dwelling. He reached the well known house, inhabited by Fanny the Portuguese. It was a tavern for sailors, and contained also a saloon for respectable people. Sylberg entered a small passage which led to the back of the court. It was shrouded in darkness; but he, who was well acquainted with the locality, heard in the distance a confused tumult, which proved that there were still guests in the house. At the end of the passage there was a door, which was usually closed.

He tapped lightly, and an old woman appeared, who threw the rays of her hand-lantern curiously in his face.

"Good-evening, Julia!" said the Major, throwing back his mantle. She knew him immediately, uttered a cry of surprise, and exclaimed, "What! the handsome Baron from Denmark? He has come to seek Bertha. Alas, alas!"

Sylberg advanced rapidly up the steps and entered the narrow court. An old two-story house stood on the background, in which a pale lantern was burning.

"Where is Bertha?" said the Baron. "I see that you have still merry society. Where is Bertha?—Is she there?" He pointed to the range of lighted windows on the ground floor, through which you could see into the saloon, from which a wild uproar of noises, singing, laughing, and ringing of glasses, was heard intermingling.

"Bertha never mingled with the sailor folk," said the old woman, harshly. "It would be useless to seek her there. She has 'gone to sleep,'" said she, slowly.

Sylberg peered curiously into the room. Half a dozen drunken sailors and other guests were present, who were making wild tumult in the festal scene.

"These are bad wild guests," whispered Julia,—“that one particularly, 'the sea-lion,' who is now taking his hot whiskey. That is Bertha's rejected lover. She would have nothing to do with him, and all for your sake. Whenever he calls her name, he grasps the knife in his girdle as if he would murder her.”

"Come on," said Sylberg, advancing towards the steps, where the lantern was burning.

She opened the door of the elegant saloon, where several gentlemen were seated at different tables engaged in not very profitable conversation—rich, dissolute men, who were only at home in low society.

The Major, whom no one knew, looked around in vain for Bertha. Julia had gone to inform Fanny of the Major's arrival, and she soon returned to conduct him to Madam's cabinet.

Her greeting was scarcely civil, but Sylberg threatened her, and she soon assumed a milder tone. She affirmed, however, that he owed her three hundred marks for Bertha's board and burial.

The Baron had some difficulty in learning from her all that related to Bertha's life and death. He declared himself ready to pay the sum she demanded, and she then related to him what had occurred in his absence. She told him that Bertha had expected him to the last hour of her existence.

The Baron asked for the child, and she then told him of the occurrence connected with Charlotte Ackerman and Bertha's burial.

It is easy to understand that the Major was greatly surprised at this intelligence. Unzer had told him of the history of Charlotte and the vanished child; but that it was Bertha and his own child which had given rise to the excitement in Hamburg, he now learned for the first time. The profound impression which this made upon him, did not escape Fanny's sharp eyes. He listened to her at first calmly and indifferently, became suddenly restless and anxious, and his voice was unsteady. He tried to conceal his emotion, but his close questions after all the minute particulars, no longer related to poor Bertha and the child, but to Charlotte; he wished to know all that Charlotte had said and done at the side of Bertha's coffin. The Portuguese, without any great exercise of shrewdness, comprehended that Charlotte, and not Bertha and the child, were the objects of his eager interest. She said, therefore, in jeering tone, looking him steadfastly in the eyes:

"You have gone mad suddenly, Baronchen! Do you know Mademoiselle Ackerman, that this news of her excites you so violently? Are you seeking her favor? That will be difficult; I say to you, impossible! This young lady, whom I have the honor to know personally, carries her little head (I say it with all respect for my handsome, amiable Baron) very high; far above all cavaliers and officers in the world; perhaps above princes or dukes; ha! ha! Baron, that is not to be done! So

rare a bird does not go lightly into the net; good luck will not help you. I am sorry for you, but I know certainly that *Mademoiselle Ackerman*”—

“Silence!” cried Sylberg; “if you speak another word, I will choke you.”

At this moment loud cries were heard in the front part of the house, and a girl, pale with terror, rushed tremblingly into the room.

“Madam, the sailors are forcing their way into the salon; they have heard that the gentleman there—pointing to the Baron—is in the house, and declare they will murder him. They have broken everything to pieces in the dancing salon, and I scarcely had time to close the door of the stairway.”

Fanny did not lose her presence of mind in this critical moment; she sprang up, and ordered the girl to fly hastily through the back door and summon the watch; and urged the Baron to fly in the same direction. “If Wild Ralph from Heligoland is amongst them, he has sworn to take your life for Bertha’s sake; go! go! there is no jesting with sailors.”

Sylberg drew his sword from its sheath without even looking at the Portuguese, and went back quietly to the saloon. Great alarm reigned in this small select society. Outside, at the door of the stairs, the drunken sailors were blustering furiously, and roaring like hungry wolves for their prey. The gentlemen present, on ordinary occasions very gallant heroes, played a sad role in the midst of this threatened danger; some of them hid behind the stove and in the alcove; one crept upon the floor; and the fourth was about to throw his purse through the window to the sailors, and treat with them for his personal safety. The drollest spectacle, was that of two very elegant gentlemen with curling black hair, belonging to a broker’s office; they had neither courage to flee or to stand firm; they entreated the Baron in the most chosen language, as he was armed, to protect them from these murderers.

“Herr Cavalier, will you be my guest next Sunday, in the

Alster Pavillion?" said one, seizing Sylberg's arm convulsively; the other touched his sword reverently, and exclaimed, "A Turkish sabre! May I ask where you obtained it, Herr Cavalier?"

Sylberg laughed heartily; and throwing off his cloak, he said quietly, "I will protect you all. Let the drunkards come; no harm shall befall you!"

His assured tone and tall athletic form inspired the timid with confidence. Sylberg stepped to the stairs and took a favorable position; half a moment later, the lower door gave way, and the sailors rushed roaring up the narrow, steep stairs.

"Come on, young ones!" cried the Baron, swinging his sword in the air. "If I had only a slip rope in my hand, it would cool your heads marvellously; but come on, I am here!"

"Rogue, ruffian!" exclaimed wild Ralph, in a voice heated by passion and revenge, and a broad shouldered sailor sprang up the steps; with his left hand he seized the bannisters and tore them apart; with his right he swung his broad ship knife, and strove to press forward against his enemy.

Sylberg withdrew a step; his sword fell, and with a hollow cry, Ralph tumbled backwards; the Baron had, with one blow, cut off the hand which held the knife. In his fall he carried his comrades with him, and they stumbled together down the steep steps into the yard.

After a few moments they returned with augmented rage to the attack; they would revenge their comrade; and again Sylberg met the foremost with so powerful a blow that he fell senseless to the floor; at this, the sailors abandoned the attack on the steep stairs, and made preparations to enter the windows by ladders.

The Baron's situation was now critical; he looked backward for a way of escape, when suddenly the cry of "Guards!" city soldiers, was heard, and the sailors took to flight.

A picturesque helplessness reigned in the saloon; but Sylberg stood quietly at the window, wrapped in his mantle and smo-

king; when the guard entered, he did not turn around, but seemed to be gazing into the dark night.

The guests crept trembling from their hiding places, and the two fine gentlemen hastened eloquently to inform the officer of the guard of all that had taken place.

"All this will be explained before the court," said the officer, curtly. "What is your name?"

"Julius Heyman & Co."

"And yours?"

"Moses Rosenthal. Herr Officer, allow me—here is my address."

"All present will be called upon to give evidence," said the officer, writing their names.

"And now, sir," turning to Sylberg, "what is your name?"

The baron turned his head slightly, and whispered, "Let them all go. I am the only culprit, though I only defended myself."

"You here!" stammered the officer. Recovered himself, however, quickly, and turning around, he said politely, "It is well, gentlemen. This affair will have no other consequences for you. You can withdraw."

The major related to him, when they were alone, the whole affair, and the officer promised him to be silent on the subject.

Sylberg was the last to leave the house. It struck three as he entered the street.

"Detestable spot!" murmured he, between his teeth; "the first time I entered it this misfortune came upon me. Away with sentimentality from this hour!"

CHAPTER XI.

It was late when Sylberg awoke the next morning; and viewed in the sunny light of day, his last night's adventures had lost their romance; such things, even if regarded as genial wantonness, could reflect no credit on him. He was therefore enraged, even to bitter irony, over his foolish levity. For nothing, and less than nothing, he had brought again to light the mad pranks of the past, and they were utterly at discord with his present position and his present character.

This visit to the house of the Portuguese, which had warmed up the long-forgotten history with Bertha, was most fatal, and would now probably be mixed up with other difficult and perplexing consequences.

It seemed to him an evil omen that this old affair should rise up so suddenly in his path. He was no friend to that sort of accident which threw without consideration a long-past sin in a man's face, just when he had new complications and entanglements to contend against. He was, however, too much of a fatalist to suppose that this old history had been brought by Charlotte Ackerman directly into connection with his present social position, and threatening to cast its dark shadow over his new life, simply by accident.

Under other circumstances it would have been a matter of perfect indifference to him whether his own child or the child of a stranger had produced so general an interest and excitement.

Sylberg needed all his sceptical philosophy not to see a special providence in these events; and, feeling more hesitating and helpless than ever before, he could, with all his sagacity, think of but one resource—to let the whole affair alone for the present, and wait for a more favorable moment of action.

No one in that degraded circle knew his name but Fanny, and her mouth could be more surely closed with gold than with the holy wafer.

Dozens of Danish officers and prominent men visited the tavern of the Portuguese, but he believed he could protect himself from their curiosity by some sort of gossip or fairy tale. The only thing, therefore, which weighed upon his evil conscience was the question as to Bertha's child; where was it? what had the young artist done with it? He had only heard that somebody had taken it away, and this somebody Fanny had not been able to ascertain.

A past like Sylberg's, so rich in strange adventures, intrigues and entanglements with other men, led often to unexpected and momentous results. He knew that he had more than one enemy, who would gladly make the child an instrument of revenge or just retaliation.

"Ha! Ulrika! that looks like her! With this proof of my guilt you could strike me hard. She ever loved to hold a mirror of virtue before me, and to surprise me in my sins. But how wildly are my visionary fancies now leading me.

"Some pious Christian heart has taken pity upon the poor worm, some old maid whose poodle or cat had died suddenly, and who sought an object for her tender feelings. For my part, I will trouble myself no longer on the subject. But where is my crafty Olaf? why do I cudgel my brain with such uncertainties? Olaf has a fine nose. I will send him to make inquiries; perhaps his instinct will succeed better than all my worldly wisdom."

He was about to ring for the negro when the door opened and Elkins entered.

The young Englishman seemed greatly excited; he pressed the baron's hand warmly, said he came to consult him about an important affair, which had deprived him of his peace of mind; he must open his heart to a friend. Mr. Hill was a man who judged of everything by cool, temperate reason. He preferred giving his confidence to Sylberg.

Before the baron had time to ask an explanation the young lord had seated himself near him on the sofa, and removed all doubt by the eccentric exclamation: "Short and good! I am

desperately in love, and you, baron, must tell me what I have to hope for."

"And you come to me, Elkins! that is comical," cried Sylberg, laughing heartily; he became grave instantly, however, when he saw that Elkins was displeased at his mocking tone. "Do not be angry," said he, in a soft conciliating voice. "So, I must tell you what you have to hope! Nothing easier than that—everything! everything to hope for, only do not let the object of your passion know how entirely your happiness depends upon her."

"How entirely! gracious heavens! the happiness of my whole life! yes, my life itself!" cried the young Englishman in an ecstasy. "I have no other thought but of her. The whole world might fall in ruins as far as I am concerned if first she would whisper one word of love to me. Oh, Sylberg, if you only knew with what ardor I love this girl! The utterance of her name alone seems to me a pure prayer; her heavenly presence robs me of my reason!"

"That does not help the case, friend," said Sylberg, dryly; he was indeed surprised at the Englishman's violent emotions. Edward Elkins's temperament was phlegmatic, especially as it regards women, and he had not suspected him of such sentimental enthusiasm.

"We shall make but little progress with such passionate exclamations. You know, Edward, I am not in love—never have been in love, and therefore do not understand the insane language of mad lovers. We must speak gravely; cold reason alone makes the strategist, and love is a battlefield!"

"Yes, upon which many noble hearts lie bleeding," sighed Elkins, hanging his head sadly.

"Woe, woe! you seem to me badly wounded, poor Romeo," said the Baron, shaking his head.

"Do you not know that ~~there~~ there is a sort of confidence more fatal than the greatest distrust, namely, a half confidence? All that you have told me up to this moment, I can read in one of Richardson's romances, but it does not teach me how to counsel

you, or come to your aid as a faithful friend and ally. Alas! you are not the first young man who has led me to imagine that I have left a sentimental period behind me, in which love wandered in shepherds' robes, wreathed its sacrifice with forget-me-nots, and drowned it in the clear meadow brook.

"I say to you, Elkins, a man must be ever a man, or he has no right to expect to vanquish a woman. The heart only loves, the understanding conquers; therefore, no sentimental sighing, no modern display of the heart. A woman is but a woman, and a man need not lose his head for the loveliest of the sex."

"Woe is me! I have fallen upon the right one," said Elkins. Though his spirit was not in harmony with Sylberg's resolute life philosophy, it encouraged and cheered him.

"If you will only follow my counsel," cried the Major. A man of your rank and fortune, with your personal advantages and intellect, must not despair if a woman does not fall at once in his arms. But you Englishmen are strange creatures, ice-glaciers in ordinary, but volcanoes in eruption, when an idea seizes you.

"I hope, however, we shall come to an agreement. I pray you heartily to finish your confession without any romantic ingredients. First of all, when did you fall in love?"

"The first time I beheld her."

"So; love with explosion! And where did you see her for the first time?"

"At the theatre."

"Ah! your love belongs to the first circle of loges."

"I beg pardon; behind the scenes."

"How!" cried Sylberg, as if electrified; "an actress! Now I understand."

"What do you understand?" said Elkins, impatiently.

"That you are playing the languishing lover, because it occupies your journey agreeably. You did mystify me considerably. An actress! I am pleased with you, Elkins. There is taste and reason in such a love affair; a man is brought into such varieties of situation; to-day you adore a coquette, to-morrow

worship a shepherdess, the day after, a tragic heroine. Ah! Elkins, and the trouser costumes! Ah! I tell you, the mysteries of the dramatic art can only be properly understood in this way."

The young Englishman did not seem to be in the mood to enjoy the levity of his friend; he bit his lips angrily, and said in a right bitter tone:

"If you have no better appreciation of dramatic art than this, you are right, perhaps, in looking at love from the same standpoint. I counsel you, however, to confine your enthusiasm to the ballet, where the leg decides the question."

Sylberg turned, with some confusion, towards his friend, who was striking his boot angrily with his riding whip, and added:

"How, Edward! you take my foolish jest for earnest? Do you know, that notwithstanding my folly, I take the warmest interest in everything that concerns you; do not look displeased with your friend because a light, thoughtless word fell from his lips. In any other but your present mood you would have understood this differently. Give me your hand, Elkins, there are few men in the world I love as well as I do you; I can, therefore, ask that you will take me as I am."

Edward's cloudy countenance cleared up. He pressed his friend's hand warmly, and said:

"I am in fault; I should not have been wounded by your jest. But when the ardor of passion consumes a man, he is irritable to every mistone which is not in unison with his feelings. I no longer know myself. I am like Hamlet, living only in great resolutions, and in fear of putting them into execution."

"Is, then, the affair so difficult?" said Sylberg, with as much curiosity as interest. "A man who can introduce his wife into the highest rank of English society will be everywhere a welcome lover."

The young lord shook his head slowly, and replied:

"She whom I love cares but little for my ancestors or my rank; her nobility is older than mine, and even in England is

most rare,—the nobility of genius, of unsurpassed art. The spirit of Shakspeare kissed the laurel-crowned brow in slumber, and consecrated her as Juliet."

"Charlotte Ackerman!" exclaimed Sylberg, as much confounded as amazed at this revelation.

"Yes, only an actress," said Elkins, shrugging his shoulders.

"So, so, indeed, the little lady! Yes, I know her," stammered the baron. "There can be no jesting with her. She is certainly an exception to the general rule. There is, too, something invincible in her eye. But do not droop your pinions; time enough yet for that. Have you been introduced at the house?"

Elkins nodded affirmatively.

"And have taken a position?"

"Heavens, what strategic conceptions!" cried the young Englishman, this time laughing heartily. "No; I have taken no position, except that the mother does not regard me with disfavor, and Charlotte envies me my pure English."

"Did she say that?" cried Sylberg. "Then I congratulate you with all my heart. You will endow her with this pure English. I am told that she is very learned, and speaks three languages. Superb! Love is at home in grammar. There are crowds of English words in the pronunciation of which the lips must be corrected, instructed. I bet one hundred to one that Charlotte will appropriate the pure English and the amiable Englishman also."

The gay and grave conversation of the major succeeded at last in inspiring his friend with courage and some assurance of success with the lovely young actress. He was, however, secretly amused at Edward's almost maidenly modesty. While listening to the enraptured praises of the worshipped object of his passion with a patient interest, he threw in every now and then, like an experienced man of the world, a few cooling, disparaging remarks, in order, as he expressed it, that his eccentric friend might not be lacerated in the realms of poetry and

romance, but have some consideration for the realities of common life.

"You do not know, best Edward," said Sylberg, in a tone of warning friendship and surpassing experience, "you do not know how important it is, especially with women who are given to sentiment, that a man should control his passions and allow his hot blood to exercise no power over his reason. The little Ackerman appears to me of a nature to seek a love-affair exactly the opposite to her own temperament, and to find that man most interesting who leaves something to her imagination, and impresses her by his reserve. Guard yourself, then, from too great devotion.

"Sentimental women look upon sentiment in man with suspicion, as not natural but assumed! They love the fiery champagne wine of passion cooled with ice!

"I have seen Charlotte but once, but I am ready to swear that she prefers a lover who differs in all respects from the lively 'Marionettes,' with whom she every evening treads the stage. She is genial and ardent, and that man will inspire the warmest interest in her heart who scorns the common routine of lovers, the catch-words of our romances and comedies, and seeks to win her heart in a way of his own.

"In her soft features I read great energy of will and independence of soul. A child of genius, to whom all hearts bow down, she has as yet found no man who has not drawn near to her in breathless admiration. O, mon Dieu! best of friends, seize upon the little woman coolly, roughly, without any moonshine or romantic phrases. Your passion will be more to her taste than all the ambrosia of poetry and exaggeration."

Edward, who loved for the first time, but loved with all the purity and ardor of a noble nature, could only answer the counsel of his light-minded friend by a silent smile. He shook his head incredulously at the principles of this chivalric philosophy, which seemed to him better fitted to all the rest of the world than to a maiden of Charlotte's intellect and manners.

Sylberg, however, continued to inculcate this course of conduct by which he himself had stormed many a proud heart.

“No long siege! no capitulation for retreat! The majority of marriages amongst sensible people fall to ruin, because of the curse of monotony and triviality.

“The man, in the moment of victory, plays the humiliating role of the conquered, and squanders his tenderness at the cost of his character; and Charlotte, the incarnation of a sentimental, glowing maiden, from what source will you draw the romantic material to satisfy her sentimentality for even eight days? On the contrary, this young lady, in case she understands your game, even if she does not allow herself to be enchanted by the first syren tones of love, will soon burn in romantic flames for you; and, blinded by her own brightness and passion, she will fall blindly into your net.”

“A net!” said Elkins, hastily; “no more a net than a game! But you do not know Charlotte. This maiden cannot be judged by ordinary rules.”

The Major looked silently before him, cast the ashes lightly from his cigar, and replied, smilingly: “I take it for granted that Charlotte is not indifferent to you, otherwise neither my wisdom, nor that of any man, can lift the veil of Isis. That is the first thing to ascertain; the rest will soon come. The surest experiences we make ourselves, they are perhaps not the most agreeable!”

Elkins was glad when the Major changed the conversation. One thing, however, the young Englishman thought he had learned, that a man might have many love adventures without having the slightest knowledge of noble womanhood: that knowledge which inspired the glowing youth whenever he looked in Charlotte’s eyes, or beheld her sweet face even in imagination.

CHAPTER XII.

A FEW days after this conversation, the winter season opened with a splendid ball at the magnificent house of Senator H., who was one of the richest merchants in Hamburg.

To this ball, all who had pretension to rank, riches, and celebrity, were invited; taste and luxury reigned throughout the apartments; and wealth and rank were marked in the appearance of those who formed the brilliant assembly; all the beauty and nobility of Hamburg were invited, and the ladies rivalled each other in the splendor of their diamonds and lustre of their toilettes.

A host of elegant gentlemen, amongst them military and diplomatic uniforms, were pressing and moving on; amongst these groups of blooming, lovely girls, who on their part, notwithstanding the stern rules of etiquette, were observing with stolen glances the effect of their dazzling charms upon the dandies and the officers present.

Schröder with his two sisters were amongst the guests. Senator H. had been the first of the Hamburg nobility to open his saloon to the representatives of art. The old gentleman was especially flattered when he was considered a patron of the theatre; though in truth much better acquainted with the price of sugar and coffee than with Lessing and Molière. "Rutland," said he, "is a beautiful piece—pity that it is not an opera."

The entrance of the two celebrated sisters in the ball room, aroused general attention; and they were soon surrounded with gentlemen pressing for the honor of a dance. Lord Elkins alone had not courage to draw near; he leaned motionless against a pillar and observed the universal admiration excited by the girl he worshipped.

In the midst of the general mirth, a deep melancholy overpowered him; he did not remark how many beauties looked at him impatiently, wondering when he would cease this vacant staring and seek a partner.

Suddenly some one struck him on the shoulder and called his name.

It was Sylberg, who in a rich uniform and his breast covered with orders, had entered a side door, and at the first glance had found his friend and also the object of that friend's quiet observation.

"Have you become a pillar of marble?" whispered he. "This is your best opportunity to turn your pure English to good account. How charming! That light blue satin robe becomes your little blonde admirably. Dorothea's toilette is not to be despised, and in fact I give her figure the preference over Charlotte's. Truly Juno and Hebe together. Who can say whether he would rather be Alexander or Diogenes?"

Edward answered hastily and confusedly. Sylberg urged him to make use of the present favorable moment, and to press Charlotte to a decision this very evening.

"At the present time," said he, "balls are almost the only refuge for lovers. In the middle ages, brave knights, harnessed and spurred, took advantage of tournaments. In the vales of Arcadia, a shadowy meadow was the lover's resource; there he timidly made known his heart's confession. To-day, however, lovers profit by the wild tumult of the dance; a word, a clasp of the hand—seen by no one, because all are occupied in the same sweet way, and the betrothal is completed before the minuet; a new tour commences. Courage friend! Faith makes us happy, but courage wins."

Elkins was well content that the Major left him now, in order to pay his respects to the lady of the house.

The music began, the quadrille commenced; Elkins withdrew from the room to a distant cabinet and seated himself. The sweet accords seemed to waft the image of his beloved before his soul, as she lightly floated like an elf here and there, and displayed in the charming movements of the dance all the grace of her pure beauty.

"Hundreds of eyes follow her with rapture," thought Edward. "Why should I not sit here in silence? To the eye of

my soul she is more true and more lovely than to any of those frivolous admirers."

As to Sylberg, his appearance produced quite an effect amongst the ladies, and the cavaliers looked at the handsome stately officer with envy. His knightly figure and polished manners aroused general attention. He was a picture of manly beauty and cool sense of power. The name of Baron Sylberg passed from lip to lip, and many a mother watched his fiery glance anxiously, as it wandered among the young dancers.

When the quadrille was ended, the Major looked about in vain for his friend. Charlotte had returned to her place, and Elkins was not by her side.

Sylberg approached her, and commenced one of those ordinary ball conversations with which people of intelligence and education are accustomed to entertain themselves on such festive occasions. They laughed and jested over some of the guests. Sylberg became gayer and more excited, and at last declared frankly that his principal pleasure at a ball consisted in laughing at the peculiarities of those around him, observing their words and actions, and guessing at their secret motives,—in a word, to giving full play to his irony.

"Irony!—a hateful word," replied Charlotte. "I detest that talent even as I detest ironical men. Wit may be sharp, and I am willing it should be mischievous, but never bitter."

"And yet many intellectual people are strongest in irony."

"Perhaps their only talent lies in irony," replied Charlotte; "it is always only a makeshift, a substitute for wit, like the innocent harmless air some men affect when they have nothing more to say."

"Well, I must be harmless, then," replied the Baron. "Will Fraulein Ackerman ask me why I appear so late to beg the honor of the Ecossaise?"

"In all sincerity, Herr Baron, you come too late," said Charlotte, gaily. "Terrible fate! I am no longer to be had. A dancer by profession is compelled to dance; others dance when

the spirit moves them. Oh, if I could only once in my life go to a ball without being asked to dance!"

"So you do not love to dance?" said the Baron. "And yet you enrapture the public as a dancer upon the stage."

"That is my art. I dance with my soul, and can comprehend how the dance was in the olden time, part of the worship of God—the temple service. We, however, dance around a well filled table. Our host has thought it good to regale us with dancing first, and then champagne and oysters."

"Is there no irony in this?" cried Sylberg, laughing. "I confess I agree with you fully as to the realities of champagne and oysters. I never had a passion for dancing. The Ecos-saise alone pleases me, and I regret unspeakably to be denied. Is it not possible——?"

"Not possible, unless you would seek another partner," said Charlotte, in an unsteady voice. "I dance the Ecossaise with Lord Elkins!"

"With Lord Elkins!" said Sylberg, with surprise. "There must be some misunderstanding. Lord Elkins has just complained to me that he had not had the courage to engage you."

"Then it must be a misunderstanding on my side," stammered Charlotte, turning crimson, which did not escape the sharp glance of the Baron, and he exclaimed, gaily—

"No,—no misunderstanding. The favor which you have refused me would be regarded by Elkins as the highest earthly happiness. Oh, if you knew how he worships you! With this Ecossaise I will save him from despair."

He hastened off so rapidly that Charlotte, who had been much embarrassed by his last words, had no time to recall him.

Dorothea, who had read her confusion in her countenance, advanced, and said, "What has happened between Baron Sylberg and yourself?"

Charlotte informed her sister, in a few words, of her thoughtless declaration as to Elkins, and of the baron's remarks in consequence.

Dorothea was shocked, and exclaimed, "You had not, then,

promised the dance to Elkins, although you told the major so. What will Elkins think?"

"He may think what he will," cried Charlotte. "The baron is shameless. I will tell Elkins that I availed myself of this subterfuge to get rid of his importunate self."

"This is a beautiful history," said Dorothea; "God grant his blessing to it! Take my advice; tell Elkins, positively, that you will not dance the Ecossaise; you can then dismiss the baron, who richly deserves it."

Sylberg found his friend at last, stretched upon a sofa, with his arms under his head, and his eyes half closed. He did not see the baron until he stood by his side.

"Happiness comes sometimes to one in sleep," said the baron.

At these words Elkins sprang up. "Come, friend," said Sylberg, seizing him by the arm, "the time for dreams and for languishing is past. The Ecossaise is about to begin, and you—you will dance it with Charlotte."

"I?" said the young Englishman.

"You see, a man may sometimes win the greatest prize without even making a deposit," said the major, laughing. "This moment, with a crimson blush, she confessed that she would only dance the Ecossaise with you."

"Heavens, Sylberg, what are you saying?" cried Elkins, in ecstasy. "Give me your word of honor that she said that."

"My word as an officer. Why do you doubt it? I am now as sure that Charlotte loves you as that she will dance the Ecossaise with you. Therefore I saluted you with the proverb, and now I will leave you to your good genius and your pure English." He drew his friend into the saloon, and left him to his fate.

Charlotte, who had by this time recovered her self-possession, saw him approach calmly. She extended her hand to him most kindly, and said, without embarrassment, "The Hamburgers are often reproached with being cold and ungracious to strangers; you certainly have no right to complain of us."

Elkins kissed her hand ardently, and whispered, "Fraulein, you have this moment given me life."

She seemed not to have heard those words, withdrew her hand quickly, and said, "Herr von Sylberg could not understand why I was resolved to dance the Ecossaise with you, although you had not asked it. He looked as if he had never heard of a lady committing such an indiscretion. I could not help laughing at him."

Elkins changed color. Charlotte continued, in an unembarrassed tone :

"Yes, this Herr von Sylberg. But there are any number of just such men. They think themselves wonderfully sagacious, and yet cannot understand the simplest jest. But come, friend, the music begins. We will amuse ourselves with the good baron. There is no better sport in the world than to mystify such wise men of the world." She sprang up lightly, threw off her shawl, and drew her partner almost impatiently into the circle of dancers.

The young Englishman was greatly confused by this reception of Charlotte, so little in unison with Sylberg's assurances. Her coolness, her light jests, her confidential tone, robbed him of his courage, of his last hope.

He sought at first, again timidly to make known his love, but his good fortune had deserted him. Sylberg had intentionally deceived him, or was himself deceived. Charlotte scarcely listened to him, was unusually gay, and both before and during the dances, by her gay, capricious moods, convinced him that all thought of love on her part, existed only in his own and Sylberg's imagination.

This fearful certainty made him incapable of any other thought, almost robbed him of his reason; he danced mechanically, his brow was glowing feverishly, his face was deadly pale. He made use of a happy moment when he was unnoticed, and withdrew. In a moment Charlotte found her old friend Eckhof, who danced with her, and she thanked him silently for the agreeable change.

Sylberg had stood apart and watched the whole proceeding; he saw his friend's hasty withdrawal, followed him, and found him putting on his mantle, and in the act of departing.

"What are you about, Edward; have you had an explanation with Charlotte?"

Controlling himself with great difficulty, he replied, "You have been a rare prophet! I believe you understand horses better than women's hearts. It seems no lady can withstand your conquering glance, and you see in other men only the phantom of your own vanity. Yes, Sylberg, Charlotte and myself have had an explanation; but, allow me to say, that this is the last time I will speak with you of this young lady." He cast an angry glance at the Baron, and left the room in great excitement. Sylberg looked after him quietly, without the slightest change of expression; but he had heard enough to know that he had committed a folly, and he was angry with himself.

Charlotte had finished her dance with Eckhof, and returned to her place, where Dorothea was awaiting her with the greatest curiosity. "All went well," she whispered in her sister's ear; "Elkins is gone, and I am free from the Baron."

Eckhof, who was under the impression that Charlotte's partner had become suddenly ill, when he saw Major Sylberg again enter the room, said to her, "How did you make the acquaintance of Herr Sylberg? I saw you speaking to him just now. From the depths of my soul, I find him disagreeable, and yet I cannot tell in what class of antipodes I shall place him."

Charlotte listened, and begged her friend, whom she dearly loved, to explain himself.

"I scarcely know what to say; I saw this Herr once only, in Obergesellschaft, and you know that I am so zealous a student of character, that I allow no stranger of marked appearance to escape me. I find this Herr von Sylberg a curious specimen. I can only describe him by the most rugged psychological opposites. I see in his profile a reputable and educated man; *en face*, however, his countenance has a hateful and mysterious

expression ; he is heartless, reserved, selfish. I can come to no other definite conclusion about him except that this man has two entirely different natures, which carry on an eternal strife within him ; he is inclined to the good and the beautiful, but also to passion and crime."

" Oh, you incarnate Lavater ! As to myself, I have not observed this Herr so profoundly ; but I have certainly, for that reason, judged him more justly. That which is fine and courtly about him, reminds me of his countryman, Polonius ; in other respects he appears to me a cavalier, just like a hundred others, and I do not attribute to him any higher, nobler or more intellectual aim.

" He drapes, it is true, the mantle of romantic glory most adroitly about his heroic figure ; but surely vanity has more to do with this interesting drapery, than any conviction of his personal pre-eminence.

" He is a Herr of the saloons ; he has been pampered by society, and has acquired his striking bearing from others."

" He does seem to you, then, peculiar ? " asked Eckhof.

" Yes, and so is every man if you observe him long enough ; yes, look at yourself quietly for a while in the glass ; suddenly you will see a strange something in your countenance that looks to you mysterious, although it is your best acquaintance. Look at me with your Cagliostro glance, Eckhof ; I tell you, this Herr von Sylberg will never be dangerous to an intelligent man or a wise woman.

" The Danes have always something of diplomacy concealed in their characters, that behind their fine culture seems a little demoniac ; it is in reality only another varnish."

" There he comes again !" exclaimed Eckhof ; turned around angrily and withdrew.

The Major drew near to Charlotte with a slight bow, took a seat by her, and said in a tone of deep emotion : " You are angry with me, Mademoiselle ; and yet I would gladly bear the hate of half the world, if I could undo what I have done ;

blind friendship led me into this error. Believe me, Edward is entirely innocent !

“ I alone, whom he made his confidant too hastily, I alone am guilty. What call had I,” said he in a hollow voice, “ to stretch out my unlucky hand to the rescue of this noble heart ; why did I resolve to believe a truth because it was the still, warm wish of my soul for my poor friend. I do not plead with you for consideration for myself, but for him whom I involuntarily deceived. Oh ! Fraulein, it is your high and pure calling in life, to recognise the hidden truth in a man’s breast ! ”

“ I do not understand you, Baron,” said Charlotte, strangely impressed by this sincere expression of deep repentance and shame. For a moment she did not know how else to answer.

“ Would to God I dared hope so,” sighed the Major ; “ but Edward’s boundless grief and his anger against me, the innocent cause of his suffering, has shown me too plainly the abyss into which I have plunged him. I entreated him, even against his own convictions, to make an end of his doubts and confess all to you. No, do not turn away from me in anger, noble lady, I will say no more ; and if you are just, you will forgive Edward.”

There was a slight pause, the Major was visibly affected, melancholy clouded his eye, his hand played restlessly with his scabbard ; he made a movement as if to rise, but remained as if rooted to the ground.

Charlotte was herself confused ; in what a different light did this man now appear to her whom she had judged so harshly ! The fault which he confessed to have committed for friendship’s sake, removed in some degree the unfavorable impression which his former conduct had made ; she felt that it was her duty to compose him, and said kindly :

“ If it was an act of friendship I forgive it willingly ; friendship is a rare flower in this world, and must meet with consideration.”

“ It is a rare pearl, and more rarely set in gold,” said the

Baron. "Alas, it was a fatal hour for my friend ! I know this from my own experience of this great and holy feeling.

"The best friend that I possessed plunged, without knowing it or willing it, my life's happiness into ruins, and was buried beneath them, and since that time I solemnize his memory in the ever gnawing remembrance of that fate which he innocently prepared for me. But what am I relating at a ball ? One thing which no art can teach us, no study win, is your own happy possession, glad youth, and the future's golden dreams ! Elkins will also recover ; but I will not envy him. Yes, yes ! I may perhaps find a tear for the beautiful illusions of this young man's hopes, and thus weep again over my own old grief."

Sylberg arose suddenly ; Charlotte saw that his eyes were moist ; an expression of infinite pain, which she had never before seen in this proud face, now trembled on his lips. The strong man, and the gentle, tender man ! What unknown charm lay in these opposites for such a nature as Charlotte's !

But in a moment the Major mastered his emotion. He pressed a kiss upon her hand and whispered, " Good-night ! forgive me ; forgive Edward," and then hastened away from the house.

Only when the music began did Charlotte remark that he was gone ; and only then did she clearly know what she should have said to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

LIKE many other gifted natures, our young actress had a tinge of superstition or fatalism in her character. She gave her imagination full play, and often fancied this or that insignificant circumstance had some mysterious relation to herself.

The peculiar manner in which, against her will, the Major had obtained her favor, had the effect of increasing her interest in him personally. The mortifying situation in which she had been placed was soon forgotten. Sylberg, while speaking only in justification of his friend, had touched a more powerful chord of her heart than Elkins, with all his glowing passion, had ever done.

As secure as Charlotte felt against the Baron, he had yet attained more than any other man. He had changed a rather stern judgment against himself into warm interest and consideration.

When Sylberg assumed his tragic tone and aroused her imagination as to his sad fate and the secret sorrows of his life, her unfavorable opinion of him was conquered.

By his calm, secure art he elicited more than a common interest in a girl of Charlotte's character. He led her to believe that she had a profound comprehension of his interior life; that she had cast a glance into the depths of his soul.

The mysterious has always a powerful charm for us when it relates to an important personage, or to a strange and interesting existence; it makes a dark attractive background to the picture. So it was with Charlotte Ackerman. Her meditations as to his dark, unknown fate occupied her more than his person or manners.

The news that Lord Elkins had left Hamburg the morning after the ball, consoled her, and she thought the mortifying adventure of the evening would have no other consequences. So also thought Dorothea.

Several weeks passed away. Charlotte was occupied almost every evening upon the stage; had forgotten the ball, and even Sylberg had faded from her remembrance, when his name was accidentally mentioned in the little circle at Unzer's mother's; and they expressed their surprise at his long absence.

Charlotte had many new roles to study this winter; was particularly occupied with the study of Shakespeare. He had changed her whole interior world; had given her a much higher, nobler aim in art, towards which she reached with redoubled enthusiasm.

Schröder was greatly occupied with the thought of giving to the public the works of the great Briton in a German dress,—first Othello, then Hamlet, then Romeo and Juliet. This troupe entered with enthusiasm into the bold plan of their director. The supporters of the old-established stage customs shook their heads over this barbaric attempt, particularly the admirers of the French tragedy, and predicted the downfall of the German theatre. Schröder, however, was not discouraged; he was convinced that the time had come to introduce Shakespeare to the German public. The new year was to be opened with Othello, and there was much to learn and to do; the actors wished to learn not only the roles but the spirit of the great author.

At that period one of the favorite pieces with the Hamburgers was Göthe's *Clavigo*. A taste for the national drama had been greatly increased by Lessing. The representation of this piece was undeniably perfect, and the audience was larger on the fifth evening than on the first. Brockman as Beaumarchais, Reinike as *Clavigo*, and Charlotte as Marie, gained a reputation which extends even to the present time.

Even the admirers of Rutland gave the preference to this character, so full of pure nature and glorious passion. She entered into these roles with all the depth and warmth of her own tender and passionate heart, and thereby produced an effect which the author himself had scarcely anticipated.

No important character had cost her so little study and fatigue, because no other had been written so exactly suited to her pecu-

liar temperament. She shrank back with a sort of awe before this picture of her own soul, and the evening before the fifth representation of *Clavigo* she said, half in jest, half in earnest, to Dorothea, "I wish Marie was not so exactly like myself; often in the midst of my part I am forced to recall to myself that in a few hours all will be over, and I will be again only Charlotte Ackerman. There is nothing more horrible in the world than a pure love forced at last to despise the object of its glowing passion! It is as if a dazzling picture of a god should be suddenly changed before the eyes of the devout worshipper into a devil's mask, trampling the heart at the sanctuary.

"Let me not play poor Marie too often! These roles seem to have a magical attraction for me, and might affect my fate in life. A new *Clavigo* might produce another Carlos."

"They might both appear in one person," said Dorothea. "Clavigo and Carlos are indeed but one man, whom the author has portrayed in two characters; one such combined would have been too much for him or for the play, and then where would we find an actor who could represent these opposites in human nature?"

"I wish," said Charlotte, "that we could dismiss this piece this evening for a long time. *Clavigo* never interests me—he is of low character; besides, I cannot bear to lie upon the stage in a coffin. No author should introduce such a scene. A coffin is a horror belonging to a journeyman's trade, and has nothing to do with art. The dead belong behind the scenes!"

The play met with the most marked success, on that evening. In the third act, where the repentant *Clavigo* returns to his beloved; in that most touching reconciliation scene, where his better nature seemed once more to triumph over the spirits of hell, who had clasped him, bound him in their awful chains, as *Clavigo* fell on his knees before her, and Charlotte, with averted face, in which horror and love were wondrously united, drew back from him to the verge of the stage, and extended her hands, as if to protect herself against him; in that moment of storm and passion, in which the happiness and the pains of love

struggled in her breast, her eye fell suddenly upon a gentleman wrapped in a mantle, and leaning against the foremost pillar of the parterre, whose dark eyes were staring at her, entranced and motionless. Charlotte was struck with terror; she had thrown herself so completely into Marie's sorrowful and yet rapturous condition, that she was herself deceived; there was no illusion; she saw the lurking Carlos, like an evil angel, once more about to tear her beloved from her grasp; she trembled in her inmost soul before this unearthly glowing glance.

"Do you no longer know my voice? no longer recognise the tones of my heart," cried Clavigo, in tones of wild despair.

Once more, Charlotte's frightened glance fell upon her supposed enemy in the parterre; fear, mingled with a glad surprise, thrilled her frame; she recognised Sylberg, and fell at the same moment, with the outcry "Clavigo," into her lover's arms. "I know not where to turn; my reason forsakes me." In these few words there lay a world of boundless rapture, and when she left the stage, she was accompanied with a storm of applause.

Behind the scenes she recovered herself fully, and laughed heartily over the creative power of her imagination; but the glance with which Sylberg had stared at her did not leave her during the evening. On her return to the stage, he was no longer to be seen among the spectators.

The Major had seen Charlotte's emotion when her eye fell upon him, withdrew quickly, as if recognising the powerful impression he had made, and unwilling to be seen a second time. He had also been profoundly moved by the tragedy. It was the first time he had seen Charlotte in such a role. He was enchained by the magic of her genius; he had never done justice to her power in the high fields of art, and he confounded the role with the actress. Charlotte now appeared to him in so enchanting, so fairy-like a form, that he scarcely recognised her. He could not comprehend how this union of beauty, grace and intellect could have escaped his sharp and cultivated eye. He was led on, as if by magic, from scene to scene, and felt an

emotion which no other woman had ever awakened; a joyful pride at the thought that she had been gracious to him; that what he had said to her at the ball, partly in coquetry of feeling, partly from a momentary impulse of truthful emotion, had vibrated on a deep chord in her nature.

Sylberg waited with impatience the close of the play; in the burial scene, as Charlotte lay in the coffin, surrounded by men wrapped in black mantles, and bearing flambeaux, Bertha, and the scene which Fanny the Portuguese had described to him, came involuntarily, but life-like, before his eyes. There, long before they had met, Charlotte had unconsciously entered the circle of his crimes; had taken charge of his and Bertha's child. Sylberg was fatalist enough to connect all this with his present emotions. Clavigo's and Marie's fate was forgotten, and with as much levity as passion, he came to the conclusion to follow up this acquaintance, so auspiciously begun with the distinguished actress, and to exert all his talent to obtain her favor.

The first opportunity seemed to him the best. He waited in the court, after the conclusion of the play, until the audience had dispersed. He waited a long half hour in the cold December night. A servant came to extinguish the lights, and from him he learned that the sisters Ackerman would appear immediately. The carriage drove up, and Charlotte and Dorothea advanced. Sylberg drew near. By the light of the lantern they both recognised him, and Dorothea turned away angrily, but Charlotte exclaimed—

“How, Herr Sylberg! you here?”

“Yes; only to say to you, Fraulein,” said he, in a tone of profound emotion, “that Marie Beaumarchais has this day restored to me the long-lost peace of my heart. I could not leave the threshold of this temple until I had uttered my thanks to its most beautiful priestess for this never-to-be-forgotten evening.

“Yes, Fraulein Ackerman, let the tears of emotion from the eyes of a cold, phlegmatic man, rest like pearls upon the laurels which to-day, as in later years, will crown your brow. I am

once more happy. I am reconciled to my fate. Good-night, good-night!" said he, in a trembling voice,—and rushed off into the darkness like a man who without consideration had said and done that which the intensity of his feelings forced from him.

"He might have said all this on a more suitable occasion," said Dorothea, in an angry tone.

Charlotte drew back into the corner of the carriage. A sigh was the only answer she gave to her sister.

During the evening she was still and silent, but her countenance was cheerful. Her brother had invited a few friends after the play; amongst them, Unzer, and the journalist, Doctor Dreyer,—the same who had been for a long time Schröder's adversary; since Charlotte's representation of Rutland, however, he had been their sincere friend. He was full of talent, of inexhaustible wit and fantastic humors. He was a friend to the English stage, but hated the opera to the death, and found the ballet unendurable.

But the past was forgotten and forgiven. No one whose talent, education and character entitled them to an entrance to Ackerman's house, remained long a stranger there. Every one expressed their opinions freely. A gay unconstraint reigned in the family circle. The children were admirably educated. They knew and honored in their parents, not a stern authority reigning over their wills and affections, but their true friends and their hearts' confidants. They were the children of two marriages, but united in heart, and in their high love of art, to which they had dedicated their lives.

The mother scolded steadily, but it was in the zeal of her love, and her eye sparkled proudly at every word of praise lavished upon her children.

"I only live for the theatre toilettes," said Frau Ackerman. "You, Dr. Dreyer, may write what you please against it, but I maintain that a beautiful role requires a beautiful dress.

"Truth requires tinsel and spangles to make itself agreeable to the eyes of men. The girls may dress in calico at home, but

on the stage it is my greatest joy to see them richly dressed. Even a beggar's robe must be made of fine material to be artistic."

"Doctor, I counsel you to protect yourself from my mother's needle," cried Schröder, laughing. "Ever since you declared that Brockmann's red velvet mantle, embroidered in gold, was high treason upon a republican stage, my mother has been your sworn enemy; and in spite of you, she buys the most superb material, and sometimes empties the treasury."

Doctor Dreyer filled his glass and called out, "Frau Ackerman an experienced Directress!"

"He may perhaps have a beautiful toilette at home, a hero of the quill! These learned recluses and theatre critics are often without a shirt, and yet prance in elegant coats before the tailor, as if there were no unpaid bills in the world, no harvest, and no Easter mass."

Dreyer laughed heartily and replied: "Heaven be thanked that like the camel I can carry a load of Christian love upon my hump. As to my unpaid bills, Madam, since I have come to a good understanding with my creditors, I give myself no trouble about them; indeed, I have most interesting conversations with my creditors whenever I pay my debts. I imagine that very few people can say as much."

They pressed him to explain himself; and he related to them with true philosophic coolness, that he had so many debts, he could think of no other way than to leave their payment to blind chance, and throw all the unpaid bills into an urn; on a certain day of the year all his creditors assembled around this urn, rattled and shook it fearfully; then called a boy from the orphan house, who with innocent hands drew out the fatal lots. "I pay three bills promptly upon the spot. The three happy receivers give a joyful receipt, the rest put their comfort and hopes in the next yearly drawing. So every one has one day in the year a hope of receiving his money," said the Doctor, "whereas before the entire number were absolutely in despair."

"It is a pity that you are not a Dutch Minister of Finance," cried Unzer, laughing heartily; "but who knows but that the

debts of the state will be cast into an urn of chance at some future time, for the creditors to shake."

"I, for my part," said Dreyer, "don't know which I would prefer, debts or no debts." He spoke with gravity, but every one laughed. "He who has no debts, has no objective perception of life; he knows nothing of elegiac remembrances, of past joys and enjoyments which exceeded his means, nor of the sweet feeling of paying his debts at last, after many tribulations.

"An unpaid bill looks to me always like an old friend; who cannot be cast off, no matter how bad-tempered and disagreeable I make myself; and in which, in my gay hours, I recognise my better self.

"No, my honored companions, debts are neither immoral nor unlucky. As the nerves unite the soul with the body, so our debts bind us to our race, give to us the right consciousness that we belong to our century, and keep us constantly in reverential fear of the debtor's prison, without which no state and no society can prosper.

"Debts are the only realities in life; they even follow us on the other shore, and long after death the creditor sighs as he passes our sunken grave hillocks, and says, 'He who lies there owed me so much money.'"

In this way the Doctor brightened the little circle, and his gay humor soon infected the rest.

Charlotte alone seemed absent-minded in the midst of the gay circle. She smiled from time to time, but it was evident that she gave but slight attention to the witty remarks of her new friend.

Unzer soon saw that she was thinking of other things, and seized a moment when she was preparing a bowl of punch, to draw near to her side and say:

"I scarcely know you to-day! In the theatre you forgot your role, and instead of playing the silent, suffering Marie you gave us the ardent Charlotte. In the house, however, you are as silent as Marie Beaumarchais."

"How so?" stammered Charlotte, and became crimson.

"You will not deny," said Unzer, smiling, "that you gave us an entirely different Marie this evening from that of your former representations. Especially in the two last acts was the difference marked. You certainly interpreted the role differently."

"And even if that is so," said Charlotte, "why should I not interpret the same character differently? Marie can certainly be looked at in two different points of view. The author has given her so little to say that the actress can use her own judgment."

"Formerly you were of a different opinion," said Unzer, "and thought that an actress who played the same role differently could not have properly appreciated the character. To speak plainly, I missed the psychological connection in the third and fourth acts. There was no motive for that exalted passion in the death scene.

"After Marie had forgiven Clavigo for his inconstancy, and then been deceived by him for the third time, she had nothing more to do, but silently allow her heart to break. The struggle was over, and the end what she had long expected."

"If this is your opinion, dear Doctor, I will correct my fault the next time. I was, in truth, not in the right mood to-day. My head ached—and then, you know, that terrible coffin!"

Charlotte was about to cut open a new citron, but her hand trembled so that the knife slipped, and wounded her finger.

"Look at that!" cried she, pressing the wound to her lips. "The proverb says 'That the shoemaker should keep to his last;' now you can play surgeon and dress my wound."

Unzer seized her hand hastily; there were only a few drops of blood, but Charlotte recited, with much pathos, the words of Emilia Galotti, when she received her death-wound: "'A rose broken before the storm had stripped its leaves!' Quick, quick, doctor; or I shall bleed to death!"

Charlotte's cry was heard at the table, and every one rushed forward. She was scolded by her mother for having frightened her, but she replied in Emilia's words: "I have blood, my

mother, as young, as warm as another ; my feelings are feelings ; I'm responsible for nothing ; I'm good for nothing !”

They laughed, and clapped their hands in applause, and Charlotte thanked God silently that Unzer had no time to criticise. In spite of the gay mood which she exhibited outwardly, she felt anxious and constrained, and only breathed freely when the little circle was dispersed. Before they separated they all agreed to attend the fête the next evening, at the opening of the ice road upon the Elbe.

“ What passed between you and the Doctor ?” said Dorothea, when they reached their room. “ You seemed much in earnest.”

“ Oh, you dear jealous one !” said Charlotte, laughing. “ You can sleep soundly. The Doctor entertains the opposite opinion from Sylberg, as to my performance this evening.”

“ Then the Doctor was right,” said Dorothea. “ A word of blame from Unzer has more weight than all the flattery of a Danish recruiting officer. Take care that you receive no earnest money from him. Perhaps you would not play ‘ The Little Deserter ’ with as much applause in real life as on the stage.”

“ Enough, enough, Frau Doctor !” cried Charlotte, angrily, springing into the bed and drawing the cover over her head.

“ You are never more unjust to men than when Unzer has given you occasion for discontent. For my part, I am as indifferent to one as to the other.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE following day seemed as if made for the charming fête which old and young in Hamburg assembled to enjoy as soon as the harbor-master declared that the Elbe would stand, that is to say, it would bear the heaviest burden.

The sun shone brilliantly upon the icy plain, upon which thousands of happy men of every rank in society were moving in tumultuous groups.

From Grasbrok to Altona, and to the Rainville Gardens, the stream, which had been bound up by Boreas, had the appearance of a magical pleasure-camp, and, in spite of its northern character, reminded one of the southern carnival.

This stream, which during the whole year had been bringing intelligence and riches from every quarter of the world to mighty Hamburg, had now become the pleasure-camp of joy and mirth. It was a city of tents, shops, pavilions, extending over the broad stream.

A crowd of skaters flew like lightning over the ice, involved, confused; the gay company united, separated, and formed in groups. People of every rank, old, young, young men, maidens, elegant cavaliers and ladies, dashed on in wild emulation. Between them flew the sleighs, of many forms, ornamented with silver bells, with superb tiger and bear skin coverings. The ladies, closely wrapped in their rich sables, behind the gallant or the husband, holding the bridle with a sure hand, and the gay jockey, in his scarlet, gold-embroidered livery. Here a group of flying children, slipping, stumbling, falling, reaching after a shilling which some passer-by had thrown them,—all this, combined with the many sports and trades carried on in the tents and shops, with music, dancing, singing, formed a “Volksfest” that can be seen nowhere else perhaps in the world.

No one remained away. Sailors, dandies, merchants, senators, nymphs from the mountains and ladies from the saloons, made

common holiday at this ice-promenade; even the worthy pastor placed his feet cautiously upon the slippery surface. The language of almost every nation was heard. Here a son of the house of Israel, with his pointed beard and three-cornered hat. English, French, Spaniards, Americans, all seemed happy and at home on this hostile element, and rejoiced in the hospitality of the winter harbor.

"London Tavern" was the name of the dancing saloon for the aristocratic world of Hamburg. From this superb hotel, built upon the ice, the music resounded merrily. Beefsteaks, bowls of punch, and wine were promptly furnished. In the neighboring saloon there was dancing and merrymaking. No one remembered that they were on the water.

Dorothea and Charlotte, accompanied by Schröder and Unzer, were present. Laughing and jesting, they wandered onward with the crowd, and amused themselves with the ever-changing scene.

What would Charlotte not have given to join the skaters, or to fly like an arrow over the ice in one of those beautiful sleighs? Hundreds were passing her in the form of tritons, muscle-shells, ships with swelling sails. Not one of the little theatrical circle understood skating or sleighing, so they concluded to while away the evening at "London Tavern."

At this moment a rustling was heard behind them. A splendid sleigh, adorned with silver arabesques, drawn by a horse in purple housings, drew up. A Herr, in a tightly-fitting fur coat, sprang to the ground.

It was Sylberg. He advanced to the little group, while the Moor held his horse. He shook the Doctor heartily by the hand, and was presented to Schröder.

"But where is your lady, Herr Baron?" said Unzer.

"Like Pluto, I wish to steal one," Sylberg replied. Then turning to Dorothea, he said:

"The course is splendid, my horse is a superb ice runner, and deserves that Fraulein Ackerman should witness his valor."

"Thanks, thanks, Herr von Sylberg, but my nerves cannot

bear such rapid flights. Doctor Unzer knows how I did penance last winter."

"Well, I will be your Proserpine, on condition that we do not enter the lower world," exclaimed Charlotte, as she sprang with one bound into the sleigh. Dorothea blushed, and gave her sister a most expressive glance. The Major took his seat, and cracked his whip.

"You will find us at the London Tavern," said Schröder, as the sleigh flew over the ice. The horse neighed joyously, as if conscious of the precious burden it bore.

In a few moments Altona lay far behind them. In mad haste the sleigh sped onwards, winning the course from all competitors.

"Be on your guard, Herr von Sylberg, or you will fly past Cuxhaven, and into the North Sea," said Charlotte, laughing. "In such a flight how short life seems; every few seconds the scene is changed, as if time was no longer measured. Yes, Dorothea was right; such a course attacks the nerves! I pray you—a little slower!"

A slight check with the bridle, and the horse, which seemed to have wings, moderated his speed. Sylberg said: "I believe we live always as fast, but the changing impressions of the outer world are not so visibly separated before the soul, and the transition from one emotion to another is less observable. To him who knows that often in a single moment his life turns round a spiral spring, every heart-throb is an existence. I am convinced that the smallest outward impression we receive often changes our whole interior life."

"It is a great happiness that this cannot be mathematically proved," said Charlotte; "we have enough to do with the perceptible impressions of hours and days to desire to cast them off; we would not wish to add to them the sorrowful emotions of moments and seconds."

"But there is a grief, Fraulein Charlotte, which divides the seconds into atoms," said Sylberg, "where the trembling of a

single fibre occasions a horror of pain which no cannon ball, no sabre stroke, could effect."

"Of this, however, we know nothing, and therefore cannot speak," replied Charlotte, strangely moved. "I think that only an evil conscience can bring such torture!"

"You are right," said Sylberg; "an evil conscience is a bad dissector of our soul's fibres, but still worse when that evil conscience is not brought about by our own guilt, when we must suffer for another, even as you, yesterday evening, represented the poor Marie Beaumarchais. This pure and innocent soul, to whom was imputed the dark crimes of the man she loved, she could not bear the double burden of her deceived, betrayed love, and the dark deeds committed against her. She succumbed and died.

"It is certainly one of the most fearful curses of this world that love which we cherish, pure and innocent, in our hearts, brings upon us in its treachery the tortures of an evil conscience—but still, still! Since yesterday I thank you for knowing where the line of separation lies between grief and the guilt of others.

"For many years I looked upon the crime of a great traitress as my own, for I still loved this woman who so shamefully betrayed me, with the ardor of my first love, when I believed in the purity of her soul, but every thought of her was torture. I felt as if I myself had been guilty of treachery!

"Oh, Marie Beaumarchais, heavenly maiden! you liberated me from the agony of this self-condemnation by these words, 'I stand before God in my innocence.'"

"What!" exclaimed Charlotte, with as much sympathy as curiosity. "You once played in real life the role of Marie Beaumarchais?"

"God be thanked, the play is over," said Sylberg, in a hollow voice. "But tell me, Fraulein," said he, with assumed gaiety, after a short pause, "does it not seem strange to you that a man who is this day thirty-eight years of age should make you such a confession during a sleigh-ride—the same man whom you lately declared to be a great actor?"

"That was a misunderstanding—I did not mean it exactly so," stammered Charlotte.

"I forgive you willingly," said Sylberg, with emotion. "You could not know what a strange companion Unzer had introduced to his mother, and even as little could you suppose that a base, traitorous nature like Clavigo's, could be found in your own sex. The noble Marie Beaumarchais could never believe that!" he added, with a light sigh.

Sylberg made merry, however, in a short time, over his sentimental birth-day mood, and begged Charlotte to pardon him for having said so much on a subject which could have no interest for her.

"A propos! I have something new to tell you, which will interest you more. I received a letter to-day from Elkins, who is in London. We are now completely reconciled. Nothing could have given me greater pleasure on my birth-day than this letter, though Edward writes in a melancholy mood. I hope that his native air, and the solitude of his Scottish castle, to which he will soon retreat, will cure our torrid philosopher.

"He is still young, and though the wounds of a first love bleed most freely, they temper a man and strengthen him for the future battle of life.

"Our first love! Would it be so beautiful, so poetic, if it did not include our first renunciation? It may sound quaint, but I have always found in my experience that those men who weave a rose wreath for life out of their first love attain exactly the opposite of that which they had hoped to find."

"And yet you did not hesitate to lead your friend into such danger," said Charlotte, reproachfully and mockingly.

"I thought that the man who led Charlotte Ackerman to his home belonged to the exceptions. Besides," he added, hesitatingly, "from the hour in which Edward confessed to me his love for you, his happiness was a part of my own life, and it was a necessity to myself to aid him to reach the goal."

There was something in his tone of voice as he said this which touched the young artist. It seemed as if she herself had

spoken. She knew now clearly what had made this man seem so mysterious to her. She thought of the impression he had made upon her at the ball, of his strange and hesitating manner on that evening. He spoke of Elkins as if he were speaking of himself. The art and manner with which he took the unhappy result of his friend's courtship, left it uncertain whether Edward's fate or his own feelings were uppermost in his mind. With this conviction she felt a slight shudder, which reached even to her inmost heart. Sylberg had inspired her with a feeling of affection and timidity which she had never felt for any other man. It seemed to her that he kept powerfully in subjection a soft voice of his soul, and confession of his own heart's meaning, and showed her involuntarily, here and there, as if in contest with himself, a glimpse of his true character.

This feeling, combined with the thought that she was alone with him in this solitary scene of wild, wintry nature, made her anxious; she laid her hand mechanically upon the reins, and turned the horse.

The Major allowed it, and whispered, as if lost in thought, "Thus far, and no farther!"

It was evening when they returned to the city. Charlotte breathed more lightly as she drew near to "London Tavern," where her family expected her. The sleigh flew like an arrow over the moon-lighted mirror. Sylberg left the reins in her hands, and exclaimed, as if in ungovernable feeling:

"Oh, guide, control always! onward, Charlotte, with this wild and yet gentle horse; it is obstinate and refractory when touched by a strange hand, but you see that it obeys you, and rejoices in the check you put upon it."

And now the sleigh drew up before "London Tavern," and from the dazzling saloon the gay music resounded. Olaf sprang from the hotel to hold the horse, and the Baron and Charlotte left the sleigh. She gave her hand to the Baron, and standing loitering by the sleigh, she exclaimed:

"That was a charming drive! Now that it is past and gone, I wish we could repeat it! My dearest thanks, Herr Baron; I

will make my birthday congratulations to you another time. Now I am anxious to know how I shall make my friends within there content with my long absence."

Sylberg felt the light pressure of her hand in his. She entered the saloon leaning on his arm.

Dorothea hastened to meet her. "Where were you so long?"

Charlotte pointed to Sylberg. "Preach your sermon to this gentleman; he held the reins, and you would have it so! Besides, it is still in good time to return home."

Schröder and Unzer advanced towards her at the same time, and Charlotte read marked displeasure in their countenances. Schröder looked at his watch, but said nothing. "Let us go, children, mother has been expecting us for an hour." He took leave of the Baron with a silent bow.

"What is the matter?" whispered Dorothea, suspiciously, in her sister's ear. "You are crimson all over!"

"The cold makes hot," said she, lightly, and sipped again at the glass of punch which Sylberg had presented her.

CHAPTER XV.

DOROTHEA soon discovered that a change had passed over Charlotte. A change which she was herself unconscious of, and therefore did not endeavor to conceal.

Dorothea had a calm, clear understanding. With a correct glance she recognised something disturbing the little circle of which she was the head.

She knew her sister better than she knew herself. She lived first for her, then for herself, and looked upon herself as the Heaven-appointed guard and protector of this sweet and highly gifted being.

She was more firmly organized, had more strength and more power of existence. It was her duty to stand between that tender and beloved being, and every grief and shadow of harm. She must never discover that there was any other world outside of the beautiful world of poetry and illusion. Nothing escaped the loving sister which moved Charlotte to either joy or pain. She had had no happiness in her life, no triumph in her art, of which the better part had not fallen to Charlotte; and she thought indeed, that Dorothea was in the world only for her, to care for all which she did not understand, and to do all for which she had neither thought nor inclination.

In daily life, and even in trifling things, where a sudden decision or firmness was requisite, she was utterly at a loss if Dorothea failed her.

All the world wondered at this dependence upon an elder sister, in one who was in many things so self-willed; but Charlotte did not attempt to withdraw herself from this kindly control.

Then came Sylberg. Dorothea had a moment of clear inspiration, and his conduct at the ball created a dark suspicion. This man, and exactly this man, might, under some circumstances, become dangerous to her sister. Such a suspicion, of

course, banished the good opinion she entertained of him in the beginning ; and her dislike increased in the same proportion as the Baron succeeded in exciting Charlotte's interest in him.

The scene in the opera court was not more calculated to make her favorable than was the silence with which Charlotte received her animadversions against him. The sleigh ride fully confirmed her deep-felt anxieties. This dangerous man had designs upon her darling's affections, and she feared the result.

Schröder shared this feeling of dislike to the Baron, and blamed his sister's ready acceptance of the sleigh ride. He considered the invitation an impertinence. He said :

" It was contrary to Hamburg ideas of decorum for a lady to drive in a sleigh with a strange gentleman, and least of all, an actress with a recruiting officer.

" As a class, they were given to gallantries. You had been wiser and more prudent to let him drive off with his red-ribbed negro. A Moor's complexion cannot be changed, but a maiden, a young maiden, should take the snow for her model, which disappears rather than be breathed warmly upon !"

Although this was said in a jesting tone, Charlotte was deeply wounded, and only the mother's mediation prevented a quarrel amongst the children.

Frau Ackerman, contrary to her usual custom, was on Charlotte's side, and said, angrily :

" If the girls must take the snow for a model, that falls pure and fair from Heaven, day and night, but it lies on every lane and street ; so the comparison has no sort of significance."

The manner in which Schröder and Dorothea combated her better opinion of Sylberg, placed Charlotte in a strange and peculiar position. For the first time in her life she took a pleasure in entertaining a favorable view of the circumstances which they brought forward and relied upon to convict.

The first man who had seriously occupied her thoughts was accidentally the one whom her family and friends considered unworthy, and whose existence was a subject of conversation only because of her conduct and defence of him.

In the beginning it was perhaps only a caprice to take Sylberg under her protection, and to please herself by showing him a noble pity. Besides, she was charmed with the novelty of differing for once in a matter of taste from Dorothea.

Without any deep interest for this man, it flattered her vanity to show her independence of feeling in opposition to her family. She was really more influenced by a spirit of contradiction than any other sentiment, and scarcely understood her own feelings.

There is no more dangerous illusion to a woman than that which is founded upon the contradiction between the opinion of the world and her own heart, without being just to the truth of the one or the philosophy of the other. A heart inclined to tender emotions grasps tightly at the choice of means to satisfy its affections, and the sentimentality which, following the impulse of the moment, holds fast to its object without any depth of feeling, wanders often from the sure path, and loses itself with all its finest emotions amongst the thorns and nettles of the world.

Charlotte was now wandering in this treacherous path. She suffered, and contended with Dorothea, for a man who had no other interest for her than that he gave a name and presence to her longing for an undefined ideal; and in the further development of this struggle, which grew in intensity, he became himself an object of her affections.

With burning avidity she seized upon the martyr's crown before she had known the love whose fruit it is.

She revelled in the pure happiness of a sorrow which seemed all the sweeter the more bitterness it shed into the realities of life.

An ideal in such a heart, over which a delusion has once obtained power, is more difficult to banish than to conjure the dead from the grave.

Dorothea did not dare to tell her mother or her brother what was passing between Charlotte and herself. She feared that her sister was about to lose herself and her better nature in a dangerous and fantastic passion.

For many long weeks nothing more was seen or heard of the Baron, and the only one who gave him a transient thought was Doctor Unzer, although from causes easily understood he had been very reserved in expressing any opinion of Sylberg.

The Baron visited the old lady now and then, but always, whether by accident or intention, on those evenings when Charlotte was on the stage.

She concluded, therefore, that he intentionally avoided her. She sought him also in vain during the play amongst the spectators.

"He is unhappy! he is striving to forget you!" was generally the result of her melancholy meditations; and with renewed emphasis she tried to prove to Dorothea that a man who observed such delicate consideration deserved at least an unprejudiced judgment.

On this point Dorothea had nothing to say; but she resolved to consult Unzer's mother, and, if necessary, to secure her assistance.

An opportunity soon offered itself, and one evening being alone with the old lady, she turned the conversation, as if by accident, upon Sylberg.

To her amazement she found that the old lady could see nothing wrong in the Major's conduct on the ice course, and took both Sylberg and Charlotte under her protection. She even confessed that she had encouraged Sylberg, and added warmly: "I cannot conceive what you have against him; he is modest and educated, and many a giddy Hamburger might take him for an example. I acknowledge that there is something uncouth and rather free in his manners; that is the result of his military calling, but I have no other fault to find with him. I understand my people, and I am convinced I know his character."

This declaration extinguished Dorothea's last hope; she had hoped to find in this old friend a strong aid to combat Charlotte's heart caprice.

"It was only wanting that you should take his part," said

she, in a low voice ; “ he has turned Charlotte’s head completely, and she earnestly conceives that she is in love with him.”

The old Frau listened intently.

“ Lotte said no word to me of that sort,” she said with surprise ; recovered herself quickly, and added, quietly, “ therefore I do not believe it. I should not be surprised, however, if Sylberg had inspired a true interest in her heart.”

“ How ! Frau Unzer ! Charlotte Ackerman and a recruiting officer !” exclaimed Dorothea, much shocked.

“ Well, well, the king needs soldiers,” said the old Frau, with some embarrassment, “ and because he needs them he sends his officers to recruit in foreign lands. I do not believe, however, that Charlotte will fall to this man ; he is too old for her !”

“ God grant that you are right !” said Dorothea, gravely.

The conversation ended at this ; the old Frau promised to watch Charlotte, and to counsel her with regard to the Danish officer.

In truth, she was not at all alarmed on Charlotte’s account ; she had conceived a sincere affection for Sylberg, and really thought him the only man she had ever seen who was suited to Charlotte ; besides she saw in this a happy expedient for curing her son of his love for Charlotte, and inclining his heart to Dorothea.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE superb St. Michel's Church, which, from its simple and noble style of architecture, richly deserved the name of the House of God, was the place of worship of Charlotte and her family.

The latticed pew, on the right hand from the entrance, belonged to the Ackermans ; it was a quiet, obscure spot, and was curtained from top to bottom, inside of the lattice work, so as to shut off all curious glances.

No Sabbath passed without some member of the Ackerman family attending upon the services. The old Frau held strongly to the belief that in the consecration and fostering of christi-
anity the artist fulfilled his highest calling ; she had, from their earliest years, educated her children to piety and the fear of God ; they remained true to her teachings even amidst their celebrity and the distractions of the world.

When the church bell sounded, one or both of the sisters, accompanied by Herr Kreyenpeter, carrying the hymn book with admirable gravity, hastened to the house of God, and glided almost unseen through the obscure hall into their pew.

The Sabbath before the Christmas fête it was Charlotte's time to go to church, wrapped in a black satin mantle, trimmed with fur ; she went alone. At her entrance the choral hymn was resounding from the organ ; she was almost frightened at its powerful tone, and she stepped timidly through the circle of worshippers to her pew ; after kneeling, and making her prayer, she rose and opened one-half the lattice. But she felt that her soul refused to be engaged in worship, and every moment her thoughts were lost in interminable distance ; a restless anxiety seized her in the midst of the holy hymn ; a mysterious discord seemed from time to time to thrill upon her ear ; it reminded her of the crying of children or the mocking laughter of a wild fiend ; then she seemed to hear a funeral wail, sounding in hollow sobs, between the organ tones.

Charlotte had fallen suddenly into one of those dreamy meditations during which the mind is but half awake, and the outer world makes but little impression.

The sermon began ; the minister took his text from Job : " I have found a propitiation."

These words touched the young actress in the depths of her soul, and she listened with emotion and interest to the sermon, which seemed exactly suited to her.

Reconciliation through God, reconciliation through love and humanity, was the theme of his discourse ; he spoke with warmth ; appealed to the heart, and did not forget the anxiety and despair into which the noblest men are sometimes betrayed when they misunderstand their own feelings, or find their honest purposes misconceived. When, however, as if in consolation, the preacher added, " Blessed are the pure in heart," Charlotte shrank back tremblingly, as if this text had suddenly laid bare the innermost nerve of her pain. She knew now, what she had not before realized ; that her heart was not free from guilt, that she had laid the hand of destruction upon her own peace.

At the moment that she thought this, and at the same time of him whose image had stood so constantly of late before her soul, she saw him leaning against a pillar. No ! no ! she had not deceived herself ; the second timid glance in that direction convinced her that the tall, stately form, the pale countenance, and the black hair, were indeed Sylberg's.

She saw, also, that his eye was fixed immovably upon her ; he seemed spell-bound, and could not turn his eyes away.

But a wondrous change had come over him ; he was deadly pale, his eyes had lost their lustre, and a shadowy melancholy clouded them, and the prayer as if from a sorrowful soul, trembled upon his lips.

So had she never seen him, and his glance aroused in her that mingled feeling of interest and timid embarrassment in greater force than she had experienced when alone with him upon the ice-course.

It is scarcely necessary to say that her devotions were over

for the day ; it is true she did not dare to look again towards the Baron, but by her glowing cheeks and trembling heart, she felt that his eye was constantly fixed upon her ; she knew he had followed her to the church, and she believed she read in his countenance why he was present and the cause of his emotion.

These reflections perplexed her and made her shrink from herself. The danger she had brought upon herself, the power to which she had given place in her heart was now for the first time clear to her.

The thought that the Baron really loved her, came suddenly so new and strange before her soul, that in this new feeling she scarcely knew herself, and she was overcome by a dark warning of that fate with which men play so long, so thoughtlessly, until at last they are seized upon and engulfed.

Almost mechanically, and as if more to protect herself from herself than from his glance, she closed the lattice quickly, and waited with a beating heart for the close of the service. She was convinced that the Major would speak to her, and thought she read his intention in his countenance.

In his pallid face, a slight tinge of color was now to be seen ; his features were agitated ; he was apparently pleased that Charlotte had withdrawn herself from his gaze ; and she knew, too late, that by this hasty act she had encouraged him to carry out his purpose.

The sermon was over, and the congregation left the church. The young artist waited with increasing anxiety for the moment when Sylberg would withdraw ; but unmoved by the pressure of the crowd, he kept his place by the pillar and gazed at the door of her pew.

And now Charlotte knew, that unless she wished to be alone with him in the church, she must go ; only here and there an old man was gliding through the aisles ; she stepped rashly from the pew, and when she passed by Sylberg, she was in reality alone with him in the church.

“ So, I see you again once more, and can say farewell ! ” said

he, advancing to meet her, and speaking with an unsteady voice.

"Farewell," stammered she, more confused by this unexpected news, than by his addressing her. The pallor of death overspread her countenance. "Will you then leave us?"

"I received my orders yesterday, and must go to-morrow morning," said Sylberg, as if controlling himself by a mighty effort. "The soldier must obey, even if the man goes to his death; but I will at least say to you, Charlotte, before I go, that my wretched fate is decided; that when I leave this church and return again to the world, there will remain for me, but one thought, but one pain, and ever round about me solitude and despair.

"But why should I say this to you," said he, in a hollow voice, and his eye rested full of glowing thought upon the pallid maiden.

"That which has happened to me to-day, must have come upon me in a longer or shorter time, therefore I will not murmur that my fate is quickly decided.

"Farewell, Charlotte! As long as my heart beats, your image will be engraved upon it, and will be guarded as its most precious jewel, long after I am forgotten by you."

"Forgotten! oh, that I could forget you, Sylberg!" exclaimed Charlotte, and her voice was choked with tears.

Beside himself with pain and with rapture, he pressed her hand to his lips one moment, drew her head upon his shoulder, then cried out as if in anguish, "Go! go! spare me—save me—eternally, Charlotte—thine eternally!" he stammered, and rushed from the church.

Charlotte never knew how she got out of the church.

Trembling, perturbed, she wandered towards her home, feverish, and scarcely able to conceal from her family the terrible condition of her mind.

Charlotte felt as if death, with cold hand, touched her fountain of life.

CHAPTER XVII.

Sylberg's blood was boiling and effervescent, and had led him during his life into many extremes of good and evil which a more calmly organized nature avoided—in fact cool, phlegmatic men are never in danger of falling into the extravagances of passion. Without being greatly gifted, he had many of the qualities which go to make a capable man, but not one of them had given a decided direction to his character. He was isolated; he was actuated by a constant and sensual thirst after new enjoyments and emotions, and a cold egotistic refinement of ideas. He possessed an active imagination, but no steadiness of feeling and no confidence in his own better nature.

Only that which was new and strange had any charm for him. For these, however, he was carried away in an eccentricity of passion which knew no obstacle and no resignation.

Every difficulty but increased the strength of his resolution, and he was never at a loss for means to attain that which he had determined to possess. The bold and open struggle found him as well prepared as the secret and tedious machination. He had never denied himself any desire which promised him any satisfaction. With women, and especially with those of a sentimental nature, he was a knight of a hundred spurs. He understood the sentimental role as well as the heroic drapery of his mantle, and his poetical temperament won him many victories.

He had talent for every species of art, but it was easy to see that he was only a *dilletanti*.

The only talent which he possessed in a high degree was a fine gift of observation, and an acute knowledge of men which seldom failed him, so that he never doubted long as to the part he should play under any circumstances or in any circle. His youthful freshness, his composed gravity, and great suggestive faculties, combined to form a man who will hereafter occupy us more than before.

Strangely agitated, he came home from the church. His cheeks were glowing, his eyes were red, and his host of the Kaiserhof concluded that some great disaster had happened to him.

In reality, the Major found himself in so exalted a mood after the scene with Charlotte in the church that it was some time before he could recover from his surprise and regain his presence of mind. He had resolved upon a pathetic parting scene somewhat in the style of "The Nouvelle Heloise," when, in a moment, all his coquetry of feeling left him, and out of his sentimentality there arose a true tragedy, or rather "*une affaire de cœur.*" The certainty that Charlotte loved him threw his false nature off its balance, and the shock this discovery gave him was in the beginning more like the feeling that a miracle had been wrought in him than any proud consciousness of his glorious triumph.

But Sylberg was not the man to forget himself long or to despair of his happiness, or to draw back modestly when the picture of Lais unveiled itself.

He required, therefore, but a short time to collect himself and compose his excited spirits, and by the help of his passionate imagination he soon reached the result, "that the whole of Denmark should not deny him what he now hoped to win in Hamburg."

"Hope! Why should I say hope? Have I not already won?" cried he, in the excess of his conviction. "Did I not see her turn pale as a lily when we parted? Were not her eyes filled with tears?"

"Ah! how irresistible she was, when in her grief at my departure, she betrayed her love, and confessed that she could never forget me. Yes, Ulrika, you should have seen that; you who despised and hated me; would you could know who now loves the Sylberg so proudly repulsed by you.

"But you shall know all at the right time; patience! patience! When you shall hear that the heart of Charlotte Ackerman is mine, I will be revenged! This is a more glorious

triumph than to win the heart of a Countess Ulrika von Linden kron. The proud lily would not yield; well then, I will console myself with the royal rose; I will be perfumed by its fragrance and enraptured by its beauty!"

With such ideas the Major returned to the realities of life; after the first tumult of his happiness had passed, he said to himself, that he experienced for the first time, a love which combined the most glowing passion with the most exalted respect for its object.

The pure ring of her voice still resounded in his soul; the magic of her innocence hovered over him and banished every low thought. The enchanting image of his beloved, in all her grace and loveliness, stood before him, and awaked all the better feelings and glowing dreams of his first youthful love; he felt himself born again, and revelled in the emotions which he had often feigned in his former love affairs.

Sylberg soon came to the resolution not to leave Hamburg; he wrote to Major T., an influential friend at Copenhagen, made him his confidant, and implored him to use all his power with the Minister, to obtain permission for him to remain in Hamburg. I will now give some extracts from this letter, in order to show his state of mind when confiding in his friend.

Amongst other things, he wrote thus:

"But, above all other things, you must not think that it is an easy matter to obtain the heart of an actress. You must understand Charlotte Ackerman better than this.

"Had it been as you suppose, I should soon have ceased my wooing, for I am weary of the mockery of love.

"The society of the Ackermans is most select; no one can obtain entrance to their home without respectability and discretion. Throughout the city of Hamburg Charlotte has the reputation of being wise and virtuous; she is under the guardianship of her mother, who has educated her in the most approved style. There are, I swear to you, people of as much talent and integrity in every rank of life, as amongst the nobles.

"Herr Schröder, the step-brother, is the director of the the-

atre in Hamburg; he is a brave and honest gentleman, and a good actor.

“The oldest sister, Dorothea, is also a girl of intellect and modesty; she is a splendid actress; she has more cultivation than Charlotte and owes more to art than to talent. Charlotte has a highly gifted nature.”

Farther on in his letter, he gives a glance into his past.

“How weary I am of dull, insipid humanity!

“Men are born, exist, grow, love, suffer, and die, and press on, poor souls, in the beaten path, and call this the great art of life. I give up willingly the Countess, my rank, and all that I possess, if only Charlotte can be mine.

“By all that is holy, I love this maiden, and—you shall know all—Charlotte loves me! Yes, she loves me!—unspeakable joy!

“Oh, Charlotte! through the mirror of your eyes I have read every pulse of your heart, and my own emotions convince me that my hopes are not illusions. Every movement, every breath betrayed that she loved me.

“Have I not found a soul warm enough to share the wild tumult of my heart?

“But you, friend, are as cold as the icicles of the north pole. Perhaps you will ask me to describe Charlotte. Where shall I find the colors to paint her image? Remember, that your eyes and mine see differently.

“You ask, is she beautiful? Yes, truly! But do you believe that a girl must be beautiful to be loved? I myself would exchange the most perfect model of Grecian beauty, which, however, has never been found in nature, for the expressive features of my Charlotte. Call it caprice—what you will! I am not the first man, and I will not be the last, who venerates his caprices.

“Certainly, amongst all the creatures whom God has made and placed upon the earth, there are none who know so little of themselves, so little of their own desires, as man. And what now is my own heart’s wish? That Charlotte shall be mine!

Was she not made for me? Ah, Major, in that question there is a world of trouble. I would curse my existence, and I would defy Providence, if it has only shown me her image to martyr me!

"You ask me where this will end? All my life long I detested that question. I know not to what it will lead.

"Imagine a maiden who combines Minna and Rutland in her own person; who unites a gracious wit with untarnished virtue; who—if you care about that—speaks three languages; who is charming, enchanting; and tell me if anything is wanting but an old piece of parchment? Away with all your old prejudices!"

When Sylberg had finished this letter, in which he exposes the inconstancy and uncertainty of his feelings, he rang for Olaf, to take it to the commander of Altona, who was just about sending a courier with despatches to Copenhagen.

The negro received the order with his accustomed humility, but it did not escape his sharp eye that the contents of the letter must have some connection with his master's gay humor.

Olaf also was unwilling to leave Hamburg. It offered him a larger field for dissipation than the monotonous town Schleswig. There the regiment was in garrison, there were fewer luxuries, the grog was not so good, the music so fine, nor the comrades so gay, as in Hamburg. He was in ecstasy, therefore, when he heard that they would probably remain, could scarcely suppress his delight, kissed the Major's hand, and uttered many assurances of love and devotion.

"I understand all about that," said the Major, laughing. "But what about the hostess? You have been very stupid, Olaf, not to have obtained for me any certain news about the child. Go,—you have lost your fine nose. I shall in the end be obliged to dismiss you."

At these words, Olaf uttered a strange cry—"No, massa, no, not stupid. I have a fine nose, but the old woman will not tell. The child is gone, protected by noble people,—that is all I can learn."

"By noble people?" said the Major. "Well, have no fear, Olaf. I was only jesting. You shall remain with me as long as I live, and each day shall be better than the day before."

At these uncommonly gentle words of his master, the negro dropped his head upon his breast, and crossed his arms sadly before him; and now he gave the Major an account of his efforts to discover Bertha's lost child, and Sylberg became convinced that the negro had not been wanting in cunning or zeal.

Olaf declared, however, that he had not given up the hope of discovering the child, and that he would find another means of influencing the old woman. She was cowardly, and terribly afraid of evil spirits; he thought, perhaps, terror might loosen her tongue more than caresses.

Sylberg was occupied just at present with much more important things than the mystery about the child, and he cared but little what discoveries Olaf might make.

Olaf left his master, with the firm resolve to prove to him by some important service that he still possessed his old energy, boldness and cunning; that what had been impossible at one time, he had at last succeeded in effecting.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHARLOTTE had scarcely come to a fixed conclusion as to her feelings for the Major, than she began to repent the words spoken in her passionate excitement, and she felt with horror, that, like a dark incantation, they had suddenly metamorphosed her whole life.

The courage which she had so coolly maintained was broken since that fatal hour, and the consciousness of her irrevocable guilt took the place of the enthusiastic and sentimental feeling she had entertained for the Major.

The silent and almost incomprehensible enigma of her heart had now found a voice, and yet she sought in vain to understand this strange and complicated sound, which seemed to shiver through her soul as from an unknown world.

Charlotte scarcely knew what she had been, and still less what she would become.

Doubt as to the sincerity of her love, was as great as the fear of finding herself deceived by him, and all the horrible phantoms which Dorothea had conjured up against this man, obtained, now that she had begun to mistrust her own heart, a mysterious influence upon her, and she did not know how to save herself from these threatening spectres.

The last sunlight of hope to which she held fast, in her painful position, was the thought that Sylberg was gone, perhaps never to return. Then the conflict into which she had been betrayed during that parting scene, between her own heart and her surroundings, would be forever set aside. Charlotte breathed freely when this probable result of her momentous position suggested itself.

The feverish impatience to receive from some one the confirmation of her belief that Sylberg had departed, drove her, on the evening of the second day, to her old friend; but she was resolved to conceal her church secret even from this tender

friend ; more from the anguish of her own conscience than any distrust of Frau Unzer.

The old Frau was alone ; she had resolved to speak with Charlotte of Sylberg, which she believed she could now do without any embarrassment, as the Major's departure from Hamburg had removed the suspicion of any special understanding between them.

Sylberg's farewell had touched her, and she asserted that all she had declared as to the excellencies of his character was fully deserved.

She was resolved to say this much of the Major to her dear young friend, and to defend him if it should seem necessary.

"Thank God that you are here," cried she, advancing joyfully to meet Charlotte. "I feared you had again met with some obstacle."

Charlotte threw herself silently in her arms, and embraced her convulsively. She could scarcely control her feelings, and had almost confessed all to the old Frau.

She herself was so amazed at Charlotte's stormy emotion that for one moment the thought passed through her soul, "It is then true she loves him," and she believed that Charlotte had come to confide in her.

Charlotte, however, collected herself, and recovered her composure ; and her suspicions were killed.

To convince herself fully, however, she said : "Do you know, Lotte, that Herr von Sylberg left yesterday morning for Schleswig?"

At this unexpected question a rich crimson suffused Charlotte's cheeks, and she stammered :

"How ! What ! Gone without taking leave ! Well that is scarcely civil."

The old Frau's suspicions were again excited ; but she was angry with herself, when Charlotte with cool composure, added :

"These Danish officers are all alike. First they besiege the saloon, receive gladly every possible hospitality, and then disap-

pear as soon as the hearth no longer smokes for them, or the trumpet sounds a retreat."

"How dare you say so!" cried the old Frau, eagerly. "Sylberg knows what society requires. Took leave of us, and begged me to greet the Demoiselles Ackerman especially for him."

Charlotte received the searching glance of her friend with a smiling countenance, and answered boldly:

"Herr Sylberg would have pleased me well, but for something changeable in his manner which did not inspire confidence; and that fatal irony, which was, from time to time, so strongly expressed in his features."

Frau Unzer took the Major's part bravely, and thought the irony was an assumed manner to hide a sort of embarrassment.

"Well, he is certainly not bashful," said Charlotte. "You should hear Dorothea and Fritz talk him over! I believe myself, that this irony is more assumed than natural. Certainly, he has something in his manner, a sort of *fire*, which rises and falls, and sometimes dazzles. I imagine him to be amiable and kindly. Every movement, every light mood betrays this feature of his heart;" she paused, as if frightened at the sound of her own voice, and the old Frau replied:

"It is not *always* the worst men, my dear Lotte, whose personal attractions make even their faults lovely and attractive; but they are generally the most dangerous to women. I had a friend in my youth, loving, lively, and finely educated, and of a rich family.

"She conceived a violent passion for a man who was hated and despised by the world; he had a superior intellect, and concealed admirably, by a most attractive manner, his evil principles and passions.

"As she became more intimately acquainted with him, my dear Lucinda saw plainly that the man her heart had chosen was unworthy of her love, but he had so surely ensnared her by his dangerous attractions—by that 'fire that rises, falls and dazzles'—that one day she fled secretly with him, and after two

years her poor parents learned that she died of starvation in a garret. The base man with whom she had eloped had deserted her and her child a year before."

"This is not meant as a scoff and reproach for your favorite, surely?" said Charlotte, with surprise.

"God forbid!" said the old Frau. "I only meant to show you that the faults of men were sometimes as dangerous snares for the hearts of women as their virtues."

"In such cases," said Charlotte, in a low voice, "love must have become madness. I can think many things possible in the heart of a woman, which we might seek in vain to fathom, but to love a man who appears to us bad, base, vicious, seems incomprehensible; it is contrary to nature, and therefore I hold that the love which destroyed thy Lucinda was a *dead love*, which clung to the branch of her hope like a yellow summer leaf in mid-winter."

"God be merciful!" said the old Frau, seemingly lost in thought, and gazing before her. "The Sylberg is carved out of good wood, and I think he would never be faithless!"

"I agree with you in that," said Charlotte, "but he seems to me so eccentric, or, to speak more correctly, so much at variance with himself, he is like a man who no longer takes pleasure in anything."

"Ah! for myself," said the widow, "I have no patience with your fashionable men, who languish and sigh, who sparkle with their rings and snuff-boxes, and have scarcely a healthy fibre of manliness left in them. Would to God my Doctor resembled in some things this merry Danish weathercock."

"The Doctor is a philosopher—the Major a man of the world," said Charlotte. "Their natures are so entirely different. I do not know how they could find a single point in unison. I can but think that if thrown into close intercourse they would become absolutely hostile."

"It often happens that men wholly different in character steer towards the same object by entirely opposite paths," said Frau Unzer, with peculiar emphasis; "particularly when this object

exercises a powerful and attractive influence upon both of them," added she, looking searchingly at Charlotte. "How often has the passion of love attracted too dissimilar persons to the same object, and no man been able to say which of the two rivals loved the most sincerely and ardently?"

"That's a very learned lecture," said Charlotte, looking thoughtfully into the fire. "What girl could describe the man who was exactly suited to her, whom she could love with all her heart? Now, Sophie, what sort of a man do you think best calculated to make me happy? You know me by heart thoroughly; let me see now if you can indeed read my soul."

Her kind old friend looked at her for a moment thoughtfully. "What sort of man is best suited to you—as if that could be a question? He for whom your heart speaks will surely be the right one."

"But if my own heart deceives me, or, what is worse still, if my heart is deceived," said Charlotte.

"No frivolity, girl," cried the old Frau, in a tone half jesting, half emotional. "You are not apt to be deceived. It is indeed more probable that you will never make a choice. That, however, is not now the question. You wish to know what your future husband should be like. Fanny the Portuguese, at Kugelsort, could possibly tell you this better than I can. And yet, without the aid of any mysterious magical art, or of a horoscope, I think I know that the man suited to you must unite in his own nature all those qualities in which you are most perfect; not immoderate, but constant, in his love; firmly resolute, even indeed a little imperious in word and deed, but mild and still in disposition; no sentimentalist, but capable of sharing your enthusiasm for the good and beautiful, but with power to lead you back to the realities of life; added to this, he must allow himself to be loved most by you, and give no excessive manifestation of his tenderness or sympathy; on the contrary; he must often show you the firm and vigorous side of his character; his manner must impose upon you; his dignity must attract and enchain you; but he must never

make you feel his intellectual superiority, or invade your interior ideal life. This would be the man for my 'Lotte. Above all, he must charm your fancy."

"A curious creature for a man," said Charlotte, thoughtfully.

The conversation was now interrupted by Unzer's entrance, and both ladies remarked that he seemed absent-minded and excited. This he at first denied in answer to his mother's questions, but at last admitted that something had occurred different from anything in his previous practice.

"I was called this evening into one of the poorest districts of the city, one of those numberless houses of destitution. An attempt had been made to take the life of the mistress of the house. When I entered, the woman was found bleeding in bed. Her throat had been cut, but not dangerously. The room was full of people of the most degraded class. I bound up the wound, and was rejoiced to leave the disreputable spot."

"Well, it seems to me, this is no very remarkable history for a physician. In that quarter of the city such things are no doubt quite common, and 'no hen crows over them.'"

"It may be," said the Doctor, "that I was unnecessarily excited. But the horrors of the surroundings, the howls and groans of the tenants, the mysterious disappearance of the culprit, all made an impression upon me, such as I never before experienced.

"In such scenes, you feel a disgust and abhorrence to mankind, which, it seems to me, only a physician could be able to overcome.

"Vice is hateful in itself, but in destitution it is repulsive; and men, become brutish, cast all checks to degeneracy aside. An attempt at murder among men who are perhaps capable of the same deed, has something of the romantic about it. Who can know but the murderer is standing near us, howling and cursing among the rest? I must confess that the attractive husband of the wounded dame seemed to me exactly fitted for such a tenderness."

Schröder now appeared to take his sister home as usual. He was in haste, listened rather carelessly to the Doctor's adventure, and soon said good-night.

When they returned to their room, after the departure of the guests, Unzer laid his head, as if thoroughly exhausted, upon the table. His mother was frightened when she saw the paleness of his countenance, and exclaimed :

"Oh, Karl! something worse has certainly happened!"

"Did I not tell you that something unusual had occurred?" said Unzer. Seizing his mother's hand he asked, after a short pause, with a mysterious smile, "if she did not remember the adventure of Charlotte with the child at Kugelsort, and how strangely the child had disappeared?"

"What!" cried the old Frau. "Did this child have anything to do with the attempt at murder?"

"Would that I knew! I would give much to know," said Unzer. "That was a curious history, mamma; but I couldn't explain myself fully before Charlotte.

"The wounded woman is no other than the hostess. A man in a mask fell upon her in bed, and threatened her life if she did not tell him what had become of Bertha's child. Fortunately, her cries for help brought the people around her. The man fled, and left no trace behind."

"God in Heaven!" exclaimed the old woman, folding her hands. "How many mysteries surround this unhappy child. It is not enough that it should disappear, but it is sought by some one with murderous intent. It must be dead, Karl."

"On that point you may be at ease," said the Doctor, calmly. "The child is well taken care of by me——"

"By you!" stammered Frau Unzer.

"You wise old lady," cried Unzer, patting her cheeks tenderly. "How happens it that you did not know this? Who else in all Hamburg could have taken so great an interest in a child for whose sake the noble Charlotte had suffered so much? It was a settled thing with me to rescue her from the fatal position into which her goodness of heart had brought her. I

was determined, however, not to rob the poor child of kindness and protection.

"My friend, Senator Trauwalt, entered into my plans. By the assistance of the police we removed the child secretly, and the stern command of the officer and my gold closed the woman's mouth. Now, mamma, what do you think Charlotte will say when she knows who stole her little protégée?"

"But where is the child? What have you done with it?" exclaimed his mother.

"My gardener, Paul, received it, and his wife nurses it with her own child."

"Take me to it, at once," cried Frau Unzer. "I must see if they are good to it; otherwise I shan't sleep a wink to-night. The child is mine, Karl. Shall it not be so? It belongs to me alone. What is it, a girl or boy? Has it a Christian name?"

"Do you think I want to bring up any more heathen in this miserable world?" said Unzer, laughing. "Yes, certainly it has a name! a Christian name and a heavenly name: the name of its good angel, Charlotte!"

"You! you!" cried his mother, threatening him with her finger.

Unzer pressed her hand to his lips; but his countenance was clouded as he said:

"These are secondary things; we are forgetting entirely the terrible events of this evening."

"Yes, truly; I forgot the poor good woman! What does she suffer? I will prepare her some refreshments; I will send wine and sweetmeats, linen and lint. Shall I cook her a nice supper, or send her some lemonade?"

The good Doctor was not at present in a jesting mood, but he laughed loudly and heartily at these questions of his mother.

"Admirable! admirable! but I really think the brave Frau would prefer cognac to lemonade, and a good piece of roast meat to sweetmeats. But let the old wretch alone! Whether the devil takes her to-day or in ten years is of no consequence. We must think of the child, the poor innocent child.

“They are laying snares for it, and at this moment perhaps trying to get possession of it. I am convinced from the occurrences of this evening, that some guilty man has resolved at all hazards to seize it; God alone knows why. I shall not know a peaceful hour till the child is in safety; now mother, counsel me.”

“No one, my son, but the gardener, Paul, and his wife know anything of the child, and I am of the opinion that we should leave it as it is; even if the old woman should confess that you took it in charge, no one knows what you have done with it. The good angel who has preserved the poor innocent till now, will not desert it. Do not be anxious, Karl; leave it with the gardener.”

Doctor Unzer thought this counsel wise, but resolved to tell the gardener the events of the evening, that he might use double caution and watchfulness.

“My belief in my future happiness hangs on the fate of this child,” said Unzer, laughing. He thought to himself, “The little Charlotte will perhaps, in the end, win for me the Charlotte I worship.”

CHAPTER XIX.

CHARLOTTE returned home after her visit to the Doctor's mother, in a much more cheerful mood. What she had heard from Sophie, soothed her and restored her lost confidence; as her friend's judgment of Sylberg was in unison with the voice of her own heart. All the heavy cares of yesterday had been lifted from her soul, and she felt as if she had escaped some great danger.

Lena, her nurse, who had been in the family since her childhood, was very dear to Charlotte, and she confided in her fully. Lena was strangely embarrassed and confused this morning; followed her young mistress from place to place, and turned aside if observed; gave the most contradictory answers to all questions; was in short, both in speech and manner, so different from her usual self, that Charlotte was at last forced to observe it; she questioned her so closely, that the old woman could not refuse an explanation she lost her self-possession entirely, and stammered out:

"Blessed God! I should not have done it! I know that full well! I have been guilty of a great sin, but I did not know what I was doing, until I felt the letter and gold piece in my hand, and the man himself had fled from the street, and was lost in the black darkness of night."

"You are raving, Lena," cried Charlotte angrily; "what do you mean by a letter and a gold piece—and who is the man?"

"How can I tell," said Lena, trembling; "but it seemed to me that his speech was foreign. He implored me to give his letter to my gracious Fraulein; if not, his blood would be upon my soul; he said many other things which it seemed to me he must have read in a book, or heard on the stage; he declared himself to be a most wretched creature, &c."

With a trembling hand she drew a note from her bosom, and turning away her face, held it towards Charlotte. Charlotte seized

it, and found it addressed to her in a beautiful and firm hand. The thought that it was from Sylberg passed like lightning through her brain.

"Lena, what have you done?" she stammered, turning pale and throwing the letter with a shudder upon the floor.

"I will throw it in the fire, and the hand that took it should also burn," cried the faithful old woman, and reached after the letter.

Charlotte pressed her hand upon it, and exclaimed—"What did he say to you?—that he would die if I did not read his letter?"

"No, no, he did not say that; but that he would die if I did not give you the letter. Well, I have given it to you. The strange man has had his way; so give me back the horrid paper."

"How did he look?" cried Charlotte, who paid no attention to the sophistical reasoning of her old nurse.

"I told you before that it was black night when he spoke to me.

"But his height! Was he large, or brunette—I mean small?"

"He was a stately Herr, wore spurs, and was folded in a long mantle."

"And spoke with a foreign accent?"

"Give me the letter, dear Fraulein," cried Lena, with increasing earnestness. "Nothing good will come of it if you read it. I counsel you to throw it in the fire, and I will put the gold piece in the alms-box."

"Do that, dear Lena; I consent to that. But we must not burn the letter. I hear a great deal which does not please me, and laugh at it right merrily. Then why should I not read the letter?"

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed the old woman. "I have often said that writing is more dangerous than speaking; and if the wicked one himself wished to destroy a human soul, he would do it more readily with a letter. The ear is not so easily ensnared as the eye."

"You are right, dear Lena," said Charlotte, who was now fully resolved to read the letter, but to convince her nurse that she had not read it. "I will not read the letter, Lena; there may be hateful words in it. But I must keep it as a precaution, that I may have a witness in my hands against this rude man if he should dare to pursue me further; and listen to me, Lena, if you value my love, never take another letter for me from a stranger. Good heavens, if my mother knew of this affair! No one in the house must know of it. Go! We have been too long together; it will excite suspicion. Go; look cheerful! I am coming in a few moments."

She pressed the old woman impatiently from the door. Then in trembling haste she broke the seal of the letter, pressed it for a moment in silent prayer to her quickly beating heart, and unfolded the page which was to decide upon her future destiny.

It was signed MAX VON SYLBERG!

CHAPTER XX.

IN the house of the Countess Linden kron, which we have before described, there reigned uncommon activity and movement during the last days of the old year.

The window shutters were opened, and workmen were passing in and out, putting everything in order.

The old major-domo, who, since the death of his master, had been the only person left in the house, had been actively employed in his preparations, and it was soon known to the neighborhood that the young widowed Countess Ulrika would return to the city. She had passed the first year of her widowhood upon her estate in Holstein, and would now take up her residence in Hamburg. This was joyful intelligence for the poor, for the kind charities of the Countess lived in their remembrance. The tradespeople and mechanics also rejoiced at the return of their beautiful and rich patroness.

At last, on the last day of the year, several travelling carriages passed through the arched gate.

The Countess was in deep mourning; she gave her hand kindly to the old major-domo, who assisted her from the carriage, told him to scatter some gold amongst the poor people assembled about the gate, and then passed with her two boys, three and four years of age, into her rooms.

Wearied by the journey, and the effect which the view of these well-known scenes of her past life made upon her, she sank into a chair and gave herself up to the melancholy meditations which the past and present called to her view.

She shuddered when the little Waldemar rushed forward impatiently and asked for his papa; she pressed him convulsively to her heart, and bursting into tears, she called the nurse to take him from the room.

“Did I not tell you, Frances, that the return to this house

would affect me more violently than all I have endured during my absence?

"I feel that I should never have left the spot where I received the last dying glance of my happiness; where every object seemed at the same time to share and soothe my pain and to call back the remembrance of happy days.

"Now, on the contrary, after this long separation, everything looks strange and dead to me. I grieved my household gods when I turned my back upon them, to weep, in an unknown home, tears over my Arthur. Oh, Frances, help me to explain to myself why I left this dear spot."

Frances drew near, seated herself on a cushion at her feet, and replied consolingly:

"Believe me, gracious lady, it was better so. We did not flee from the remembrance of happy days, but from that terrible moment in which all the voices of the house told us that no tears, no prayers, could call back to you your dear and honored husband. It was surely better for you to escape from all that recalled to you that terrible moment. And then shall I remind you that you breathed more freely when you left Hamburg behind you, having had here more than one terrible trial to endure."

Ulrika sprang from her seat at this remark, a deadly paleness covered her cheeks, the tears which had been flowing freely were suddenly checked, and she seemed overwhelmed with anguish.

"Of what do you speak, Frances; do you speak of the miserable wretch, whose innate depravity exceeds his power of doing evil? Ha! what terrible recollections have you aroused in my soul! I know now why my soul trembled at the thought of Hamburg and this house. God be praised, the peaceful grave of my Arthur had no terrors for me. In the last hour, with the clear eye of death, Arthur knew the shameful traitor whom he had so long believed to be his true friend.

"Ah! Frances, what would have become of me if Arthur had left this world with this suspicion against me in his heart?

His death would also have destroyed me, and the hellish revenge conceived by Sylberg would have triumphed in eternal mockery over everything holy and true."

"Calm yourself, gracious lady," said Frances. "That base man is not worthy of your thoughts. Let him but dare ——"

"Dare!" cried Ulrika, and her countenance assumed a proud, resolved expression. "What has he left to dare? his role is completed, and he will be careful not to come again into my presence. Such men are powerless and cowardly when they know they are understood. Dare, indeed! I laugh at the word."

At this moment a clock in the next room struck nine, very slowly. The Countess shuddered, overcame her emotion, however, quickly, and said, in a calm tone: "Nine o'clock! Arthur died at this hour; with the last stroke he breathed his last sigh; the sound echoes in my soul. I think my ear would recognise the tone of this clock among a thousand others; it can never be forgotten."

Frances, who was by nature suspicious, shuddered at these allusions to that unhappy moment; her heart was filled with forebodings.

Ulrika now summoned the old Ingbert, the major-domo.

"My faithful friend, you have cared well for my interests during my absence! I begin already to feel at home." She asked many questions as to occurrences during her absence, and at last demanded if she herself had been inquired for. It appeared to the Countess that Ingbert lost his self-possession at this question; he stammered some unknown names; she pressed him, therefore, to speak openly what was on his heart, and added, jestingly: "Remember, friend, that I was always curious; I always took a particular pleasure in knowing the sayings and doings of those who visited my house. I have been more than a year absent from Hamburg; you have no doubt heard a great deal of news in this time, much, perhaps, which relates to myself."

Honest Ingbert was much confused at these last words of his mistress, and he entreated her not to press him to-night with

questions; he wished to be happy on the night of her return. What he wished to say and must say was not in harmony with this joyful moment, and he had not the courage to distress her.

"My God! Ingbert! how strangely do you speak!" cried Ulrika. "What can have happened which I may not as well listen to this evening as to-morrow. I find my property in good order. I have no near relations in this city; speak frankly and fully. I will have it so! you must conceal nothing!"

The old man looked at her with a timid and pitiful glance, and with down-cast eyes, he replied: "My dear and honored lady, forgive me if I say that to you which has caused me more bitter care and heart sorrow, than I ever thought to endure since the death of my beloved master. My gracious lady, you are the object of the most terrible slanders. It is said that during the life of my blessed master, the Count, you had a love affair with Baron Sylberg; it is said that the Baron deceived his friend and yourself; and such base things are said, my lady. I have heard them with my own ears."

Ulrika had listened quietly to her major-domo, without a change of countenance. At his last words her proud figure was bowed for a moment, and she stared before her as if she could not comprehend the meaning of the old man's words; then recovering herself, she said calmly:

"It is well, Ingbert; those who have made you angry are not in reality so bad as their words indicate; we must, therefore, have some consideration for them.

"As for the Baron, he was wise to leave Hamburg and thus escape general condemnation."

"Do you mean Herr von Sylberg? He has been the whole winter in Hamburg, and I saw him yesterday at the Altona gate."

"He is here," cried Ulrika, trembling violently. "Ha! Frances, did you hear that?"

"How can that surprise you so much, my gracious lady, and of what consequence is it to you where Baron Sylberg is to be found?"

"You are right," exclaimed Ulrika; "I cannot explain why this news terrified me; the journey has affected my nerves, and I need rest. Go, Ingbert, and to-morrow we will speak further. Good-night."

Ulrika fell exhausted upon the sofa and hid her face. She was a long time silent, and Frances did not dare to speak. At last the Countess rose, and said with a sad smile, "I think men are always children as it regards their fate, and in whatever new form it advances to meet them, they are weak and trembling. Since I have known this Sylberg, he has had for me a mysterious significance, and misfortune and crime follow ever in his footsteps.

"Even at that time in Copenhagen, when, as an inexperienced maiden, I gave too ready an ear to his protestations of homage and of affection, I feared him more than I could comprehend; and, wholly unacquainted with my own heart, I thought the timid feeling with which he inspired me was love, while in reality I never drew a free breath in his presence. Ah! Frances, what strange, curious creatures we are, ever mistaking the voice of our own hearts!

"I imagined that I loved this man; his glowing ardor stunned me, his impetuous passion made me tremble. Suddenly, when I had almost become his certain prey, a kind Providence came to my rescue. I learned to know this man as he is, a cold egotist, without principle, without faith in God or man; nothing is too pure or holy to be sacrificed to his boundless sensuality.

"When this knowledge first dawned in my soul, I was full of terror; repentance, suffering and shame almost destroyed me when I discovered the low tastes and base character of the man who had almost called me his own.

"My timidity was changed into profound contempt. When I gazed into the abyss towards which I had unsuspectingly hastened, I recovered myself and found the strength to resist and break off all connection with him."

"And yet he remained after your marriage the intimate friend of your husband," said Frances.

"If you had known the Count as well as I do, you would not be surprised at this.

"With all Arthur's amiability he was very obstinate, and in certain social relations his love had no influence over his other affections. Sylberg was the oldest friend of his youth. I believe he would sooner have doubted his own honor than that of this man, so wonderful was the power which this traitor, by his great talent for dissembling, exercised over him. He drew near to his heart, and watched his most secret emotions.

"Once I desired to seek to open his eyes to this man's character, who was so utterly unworthy of his friendship. But bitterly did I regret my temerity. Not that my husband loved me less, but I was soon conscious that Sylberg was even dearer to him than before. It seemed as if the fear of losing him through me had increased Arthur's affection.

"Towards me, the miserable wretch observed during all that fearful time in which he came daily to my house, a calm and assured deportment, which completely robbed me of my self-possession, till at last the measure of his iniquity being full, and my husband wholly ensnared, he thought he had won his devilish game.

"The Count, sick unto death, had but a few hours to live, and it was necessary to choose a protector and guardian for myself and the children.

"Then Sylberg dared to set in motion his long-cherished plan of revenge. He hated me because I had, in abhorrence, broken loose from him in my girlhood. You know the history of the unhappy letter which I had written to him during my engagement, and he had preserved this letter. He showed it to the dying Count, as testimony against me. But, God be praised, the arrow flew wide of the mark.

"It is certain," said the Countess, after a short pause, "that he had nothing else in view than to induce the Count to appoint him guardian of the children, and thus I myself, with all my

fortune, would have been in his power. What are all the scandals of the world in comparison with this frightful thought? Imagine that Sylberg had succeeded in prejudicing the Count against me, and I had had no opportunity of justifying myself! But a kind Providence ruled over me. I also had his letters to show, which he believed I had destroyed."

"Never shall I forget my terror at the report of the pistol," said Frances. "Immediately after, the Baron rushed, pale as a corpse, from the room, and we have not seen him since."

"Let us not think of that fearful hour," said Ulrika, with a shudder. "If Arthur had killed him, how terrible would have been the consequences!"

"Yes, it was certainly better that the traitor did not receive his recompense here, at the hands of a dying man."

CHAPTER XXI.

EXTRACTS FROM CHARLOTTE'S LETTERS.

"It has been long since I saw you, my Sophie. How many obstacles oppose themselves to the most innocent steps in our lives! In the whirl of business, under the pressure of circumstances, watched by countless curious eyes, there still comes, after long waiting, an hour in which we feel the gladness of our friendship, and can share with each other our secret joys—joys which are laughable in the eyes of a pampered world—a world which is ashamed of its own emotions.

"We live within the compass of a wall, Sophie, and yet we are separated; my life flickers unsteadily, and I wish to awake from a dream, and never to dream again.

"For some time past I see everything in a sad light. The days of my childhood are past, and I have become early meditative. Oh! I feel, Sophie, that my future life will not be gay as the past.

"My soul is as cold as this wintry season, but I will come to you, and you will comfort me.

"We have again played *Clavigo*; as I lay there in the coffin, representing poor Marie, pallid, dead, without emotion, and yet conscious of the tumult of the world, oh Sophie! I cannot tell you —

"All that you have heard of Baron Sylberg and myself belongs to those fairy tales which men are ever telling. You know how I despise the dainty flatteries which are lavished upon persons of my profession, and that they are almost sufficient to make me hate my art.

"Must an actress be looked upon boldly because she appears in so many different forms, because she is forced by her profession to try to please a gay and merry assembly? But few seek us with the heart.

"In the tumultuous crowd of fops that surround us we must

learn to bear much that is almost insupportable. It is unfortunate that some among us have, and still do, give occasion for evil opinions of us; this prejudice has often irritated me, and more than one has suffered from my anger.

“You know, Sophie, that I have had opportunities to leave the stage honorably, if I had hoped to be happier in any other rank. Sophie, all the paths of this world are strewn with thorns and roses, mostly with thorns.”

“You are cruel to torture me so about the Baron. If you love me speak of him no more. I pray you, say to him that he must avoid me for my peace; he must not pursue me.”

“Sophie, this must be a most hostile world, where two persons cannot walk in a street, no matter how wide it may be, without coming in each other’s way.

“I have had vexations and difficulties which almost banish me from the stage, and yet this talent, which spurs me on, must be something better than a low ambition.

“I myself am convinced that I would be mortified if some small reward of honor did not sweeten my labor. But I hate no one for playing better than myself.

“I have preserved my taste for the theatre, and I am persuaded that the world as it now is must have theatres and romances—models for imitation; fictitious models are best, as models in real life awaken more envy than emulation.”

“I have had a terrible shock, a letter from Baron Sylberg. The winds seem to have blown it to my hands. In the name of our friendship, Sophie, what shall I do? Counsel me what I shall answer.

“How gladly would I be with you! You were never so indispensable to me as now. I am dead to all emotion except that of friendship. I will write to you; you must not come to me! I cannot see you—will not see you!”

“He is certainly frivolous; I am firmly resolved to have nothing more to do with him! I will never speak to him again! I will see what effect that will have upon him; he shall know that I am indifferent to him; he shall respect me if he does not truly love me. I pity the heart that he deceives!”

“Since the days of my childhood, since my emotions have developed, I have been conscious of a great longing for something, I knew not what; this thirst was so intense it was almost martyrdom. I knew always that something was wanting to my happiness, but I sought it in vain.

“You would be surprised if this longing of a young girl had nothing to do with love.

“Do you remember the time when we read Sir Charles Grandison together? How eagerly we swallowed all that the good romance-writer laid before us!

“We agreed that Sir Charles was the right man, and were jealous of each other as to which of us loved him most.

“Later, we knew that Grandison was a fiction, and no original. The conviction of this truth was at first painful; I must bring down my high thoughts, or subdue them. Amongst the countless originals which I called up before my mind, there was not one which answered to my ideal. There were men who possessed rare accomplishments, but they were constantly endeavoring to display them, and to conceal their faults; others who only affected accomplishments; others who seemed only to desire to exhibit their faults. But how can I describe all these caricatures in manly form? I had formed an ideal to myself, in the truth of which I fully believed; he whom I pictured to my fancy, possessed virtues and faults and accomplishments, and was attractive in them all. He made no effort to exhibit his virtues and accomplishments, and did not seek to conceal his faults. A sweet and warm imagination gave to this being form and grace, which led me onward. I was happy in this vision; and those were sweet hours which I dedicated to it. It was present in my dreams; when I awaked and it faded away, I feared it was

lost for ever, and secret tears fell from my eyes. Sophie ! Sophie ! this image is the image of Baron Sylberg !”

“ I dare not play Emilia Galotti frequently, it has too powerful an effect upon my imagination.

“ Amongst a hundred roles which fall to me, there is scarcely one in which I am so little an actress.

“ You know that I have lately played Emilia, and even yet I am weak and suffering from it.

“ I have felt her sorrow when she provoked her father to kill her. I have felt the stroke of the dagger ; not painful, but a cordial to my oppressed heart.

“ I have often thought how few of the audience could experience what I felt so powerfully. The clapping of hands and genial applause would awaken me from my musings, and I was again an actress.

“ Sophie, when I hear the warped judgment which is pronounced upon this play, I know that those who do not feel it as I do, must, of course, judge it differently.

“ They cry out against Odoardo, because he slew his daughter. Shall not Odoardo act as the father of Virginia once acted, simply because he lived some hundreds of years later ? You forget, Sophie, that we are not masters of our passions, and we may as well say, ‘ I feel a necessity to commit murder,’ as, ‘ I feel a necessity to live.’

“ It is certain that there are passions which are utterly abhorrent to us, and others which deserve our tenderest pity.

“ A father, like Odoardo, who kills his daughter to save her from shame, and a man who murders another to rob him, are surely different culprits.

“ The same can be said of suicides, who have been moved by the most powerful and irresistible emotions ; call it madness ; what you will.

“ The passions set bounds to our reason, and are capable of subjugating it entirely.

“ The man was right, who, intending to kill himself, when

the pistol flashed three times in the pan, as he held it to his head, laid it aside and said, 'You are wiser than I am.'

"But it is said 'You shall not forestall God.' What a proud thought, Sophie; that man can forestall God! He, the Father of our nature, who, according to his unsearchable purpose, has made us what we are, who leads our every step through hidden paths, who has created cause and effect, and without whose will 'not a sparrow falls to the ground.' Can this great God be forestalled by such weak creatures as we are?

"I believe that we all die natural deaths, whether it be of apoplexy or self-murder.

"These, Sophie, are my opinions of all those who, in their pride of humanity and cold wisdom, would deprive nature of her rights.

"I will not close my eyes to the tears of sympathy and pity, whether it be over the urn of a shepherdess in Arcadia, or for the two lovers who were found dead on the grave of Minos."

"An actress is so accustomed to the language of the stage, that she often uses it involuntarily when writing to her friends. How grieved I am, how cruelly does it torture me to know that I have thus wounded my friend!

"It is true that death is sweet to me when I play Emilia Galotti, and even the death of young Werther seems to me admissible, although my reason contemns him. Was Odoardo wholly a father, when he plunged the dagger into the heart of his noble and beloved daughter? No! he was a monster, a barbarian! Was there, then, no other way to save his dear, loved child?

"Why do they represent the follies and crimes of the Spaniards and other nations upon the German stage? Have we not vices enough of our own?

"A feeling heart suffers too much at these wild, distracting scenes; every humane spectator is agonized.

"But Heaven be thanked, Sophie, your Charlotte has regained her courage, and adopts fully your philosophy.

"If men are so ennobled, so exalted over other creatures, by their power to control their passions, then must their existence be most acceptable to their Creator.

"You are right when you declare that only vicious and wicked people do not know how to value and cherish this life.

"I wrote to you as to the necessity men felt to destroy themselves. Is not this necessity produced by our passions?

"Sophie, you must look at actors from a very different point of view than that from which you regard other men. We are too often, in effect, in a sort of enthusiasm, in which we must play our parts.

"I am of the opinion that Werther, who was not vicious, played rather the part of a perverted philosopher than a despairing lover; but this led him, in the end, to crime. The author of Werther's life has, in his enchanting style, so charmingly depicted all its events that many were inspired with a thirst to imitate his hero. Oh! Sophie, to what results can we not be led by the eloquence of such a magician?

"And yet I do not believe that the young Goethe would make such an attempt on his own life; it was too sweet to him!

"But what shall we call a suicide? A theft? The expression is too weak. It is atrocious to rob God of a precious jewel which he only lent to us!

"My hands are trembling! Would that I could recall my last wild letter! Would that I had never written it!

"But the answer was necessary from the friend who loves me, who is my other soul!

"Oh! this soul, this poor heart is wounded! It will be, it is rent in twain! Oh! Sophie, could you heal my wounds? But what do I wish?

"Even the wounds inflicted by him are acceptable to me! My soul is full, yes, full of him!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE condition of Charlotte's mind is laid bare before us in these fragments of letters, and needs no commentary.

They contain the complete and sorrowful history of a young heart thrown into fearful doubt between the deep and enthusiastic love it feels for the adored object, and the dread of deceiving itself in the innocence and purity of that being. A good angel seemed ever mingling its prophetic voice with her dreams, to warn and save her from the enchantment of her love.

Charlotte felt that she was dreaming; she wished to awaken and to dream no more. One moment she would rouse up like a maniac, as if to resist this overwhelming passion; the next she seized upon it with redoubled strength, and felt like Emilia Galotti, that a dagger-stroke from his hand would be a cordial to her oppressed heart. Bright and dark dreams were for ever flitting before her soul, and she could not comprehend her own mental condition. Suicide had no terrors for her. She philosophized over Werther's death with that sort of resignation which smiles at itself, and delights in the anticipation of pain.

In this clear and sure foreboding, that this love would be fatal to her peace, lies, I think, the simple psychological solution of that strange mystery of her soul, composed of exalted ideal enthusiasm, and cunning self-deception.

Charlotte grasped her tragic fate in advance. She was intoxicated, dizzy with the rosy fragrance of her young love's spring and anticipations of death. She knew from the beginning that these roses were only blooming to adorn at some future day the sacrifice of deceived, betrayed love.

We will now resume the thread of our story. By these fragments of letters we wish to show in Charlotte's own words the state of mind in which she had been brought by Sylberg's letter. This letter, as we will soon see, bound her inevitably to the man from whom she had so lately thought herself liberated.

It is not necessary to give the contents of the Major's letter to Charlotte. It breathed the most glowing love, but its tone was as proudly passionate, and yet as soft and tender as the impetuous and sanguine temperament of Sylberg.

He adjured her, in the conclusion of the letter, more commanding than entreating, however, to appoint him an interview somewhere between heaven and hell, that he might receive from her own mouth her decision as to his fate. There was but one choice left for him, either to live and rejoice in the possession of her love, or to die without regret.

When Charlotte read these lines she felt, at first, only the emotion of scorn and injured honor, and her pride revolted at a mode of speech which declared such truths so boldly and decisively, expressed feelings and challenged a return so imperiously to her, who had heretofore only known the magical mysterious tones of poetry, in its purest accords.

She was forced to laugh over the strange defiant style of this letter, which seemed more like a military order than a declaration of love.

But exactly that which wounded her pride at its first reading became, as she gazed longer at the firm and beautiful writing, less incomprehensible, and, at last, she confessed to herself, that in no syllable was this letter at discord with Sylberg's manners or character. Once convinced of this, the letter made an entirely different impression upon her. Its glowing passion brought crimson to her cheeks, and filled her trembling heart with the same ardent emotions.

Now, for the first time, did she think she understood this letter. Now the proud and yet soft and tender image of the man who had written it, stood before her with all his irresistible enchanting power, and every word of his was a flattering echo of the love she felt in her inmost soul—felt for him!

He could not have written otherwise, without denying, renouncing his best, noblest feelings. He did not need exuberant protestations, or the poetic language of flowers, to tell her that he was conquered, that his happiness depended upon her alone!

He pleaded like a commander, and, was a despotic suppliant. In a brief space, Charlotte could not find one single word in the whole letter which was not in harmony with that enchanting image which she had often pictured as the ideal of her love.

Even the confident tone, which at first had seemed rude and coarse to her—how soft, how subduing did it not strike upon her heart when she connected it with his pleading voice and earnest, thoughtful glance—

“You love me,” said the Baron. “That alone gives me a claim, and gives me courage. No power on earth—not even you yourself, Charlotte, can now inspire me with fear.

“If you escape from me again to-day, I am capable of sending a ball through my brain to punish you for your treachery—not to me, for how do I deserve your love? No, no! but treachery against your own noble heart.”

Charlotte bowed down and wept tears of trembling agitation over this wild and yet tender letter. She revelled in the feeling of being loved by this man, and yet trembled at the thought of belonging to him, who even now, while her fate was still in her own hands, ruled over her so despotically. What complications, what struggles, had not this love already introduced into her peaceful existence?

How should she make clear to those who did not know him, who indeed hated him, what mighty irresistible power attracted her to this man?

As she read and re-read Sylberg's letter, care and perplexity vanished from her heart.

His confidence, his calm assured tone strengthened her, and the conviction that by the side of such a man she might overcome or endure all the storms of life, cheered and comforted her, and her only thought now was how she could answer him.

In a heart consecrated to love, only a spark was necessary to kindle all the flames of heroism and determined self sacrifice. The struggle with the world for such a high object would be a cooling stream in which the thirsty heart would bathe with

rapture, and in the fiery trial of its love it would find consolation for its anguish.

Notwithstanding her terror of her family, Charlotte panted for this struggle with a hostile world, and she found a secret pleasure in contemplating the sufferings she would endure for her love, the severe trials to which she would be subjected from which common souls would sink back with affright.

"Shall not the tragic actress once in her life play a part similar to those she had represented upon the stage and had herself felt to be living realities ?

"For what purpose is poesy, its noble characters, its exalted ideas, unless it leads us under the same circumstances to cherish the same emotions and yield ourselves up to the same enthusiasm which inspired the author ?

"What would our existence be if we did not live to experience the great moments of life under the same outward circumstances and with the same interior poetical feeling which the great authors portray ?

"Shall the world of poetry for ever remain a strange world to us ? Shall we never be allowed to introduce its emotions into the realities of life ?

"If I experience the love of Juliet, why shall I not act even as Juliet acted ?

"Is Rutland so noble, so attractive, so lovely, so penetrating, simply because she is a creature of the imagination ? Is it not rather because every exalted nature feels as Rutland felt ? her love was true and profound, and her sorrowful fate was an intrinsic necessity of that love. Away, then, with all pitiful considerations !

"Those who are perplexed at being and suffering in this life that which enraptures them in the realms of poetry and romance may be, in my opinion, good enough for this world, but they have no home in the beautiful kingdom of the ideal.

"He is false ! false to himself who has not the courage to seek, through the thorny paths of this world, for those luminous heights !"

After Charlotte's decision to answer Sylberg's letter, and grant him the interview he demanded, she looked around for means to place her reply in his hands, and at this first step she was shocked at the difficulty; yes, impossibility of finding a single acquaintance to whom she dare trust her secret. In vain the whole circle of personal and theatrical friends passed in review before her; not one was suited to her purpose.

"Woe! woe! what a sad beginning!" said she and began to recall all the tricks and crafty arts by which lovers in comedies seek to attain their aim. But not one of all the many modes which operate so successfully upon the stage met with her approbation, and she became so discouraged as almost to give up her whole plan. Suddenly she resolved to select a person entirely outside of her circle of acquaintance.

Charlotte knew that there were women in Hamburg of respectable position, who undertook such commissions; they were called "fairies." She had frequently heard her acquaintances speak of these fairies; one of them was also a celebrated fortune-teller, by the name of Madam Fanny. Charlotte also knew that many young ladies of the highest rank, either from curiosity or superstition, visited Fanny to have their fortunes told.

She had but little confidence in this art, but it afforded her a welcome pretext to visit this woman, and through her, to send her letter to Sylberg, and the burning desire to place her reply in the Major's hands as quickly as possible soon overcame her last scruple. Many a young girl had, by the use of such means, encouraged her lover, and at last succeeded in attaining her object. Why should not she also, oppressed and abandoned as she felt herself to be, seek to attain that by craft which the opposition of her family made difficult, and, indeed, impossible in any other way?

The next evening, as she had nothing to do upon the stage after the first act, she slipped unnoticed from the theatre, and took the shortest path to Kugelsort, where Madam Fanny resided. The front part of the house was occupied by poor but honest mechanics. The street was dark, and Charlotte

passed along unseen ; she was thickly veiled, and had thrown a large mantle around her. She was informed by an old man at the entry that Madam Fanny lived in the second story ; she climbed the steep stairs with a quickly-beating heart, and Madam Fanny's haggard form was seen at the open door, with a light in her hand. She was probably accustomed to visits from thickly veiled ladies. With simpering affability she motioned Charlotte to enter the room.

"Come on, my Fraulein, there is no one here before whom you need feel constrained, we are entirely alone ; therefore don't be timid. In what can I serve you ?"

The light now fell upon the sharp features of the speaker ; and Charlotte was struck with terror, when at the first glance she recognised the woman who had caused her so much embarrassment as she stood by Bertha's coffin.

"Are you Madam Fanny?" she stammered.

"Yes, at your service, gracious Fraulein ; I am Madam Fanny," she said, with an affected courtesy, while the deadly glance of her brown eyes seemed to pierce the veil which concealed the unknown visitor.

"Beautiful child, will you not lay off your hat and mantle?" said she, entreatingly. "Here no one need be veiled ; I should soon forfeit my reputation with the nobility, if I did not know how to keep a secret."

"Thank you, dear Madam," said Charlotte, sinking exhausted upon the chair which Madam Fanny had drawn near the table. "To-day I wish to remain unknown to you, as only in this way can I attain my object. I have heard much of you, and I am curious to try your art myself. Let me see, then, what your cards will prophesy."

"While you are veiled?" cried Madam Fanny, angrily. "No, Mademoiselle, that cannot be !

"I cannot read the future of those who hide their faces from me. In the eyes and in the features of those who question me, lies the secret of my art, still more than in the cards."

“I thought, Madam, you professed to tell fortunes with cards and that the physiognomy had nothing to do with it.”

The Portuguese measured again, with a searching and displeased glance, the slender form of her visitor; and seemed as if she could not resolve to fulfil her request. She became friendly, however, when Charlotte threw a thaler upon the table, and her fine expensive gloves did not escape her sharp eyes; they betrayed the lady of distinguished rank.

Without another word, she opened a drawer, took out a pack of cards, stepped to the table, and commenced to arrange them in the form of a star. From time to time, she muttered incomprehensible Portuguese words, her thin fingers flew rapidly over the cards, and her eyes were fixed inflexibly upon them.

When the figure was complete, she threw a red silk cloth over the cards; then called to Charlotte to rise, and asked in a hollow voice, if she wished to know something in the future which was immediately connected with the present—or if she wished her general future fate to be unfolded.

Charlotte thought for a moment, and then replied, “Tell me, in the first place, what the future promises; if I find that what your cards foretell is probable, then I will ask something as to the present.”

The Portuguese bowed her head, stepped back from the table, raised her arms in a solemn manner, and then directed Charlotte to lift the cloth carefully from the cards; adding that no other hand than Charlotte’s could lift the veil from her own future.

Charlotte obeyed the command, and saw to her amazement, that the cards had assumed an entirely new form; it seemed as if some magical hand had been occupied with them under the cloth.

The Portuguese stepped to the table, pressed her hands convulsively against her temples, then motionless and with inflexible glance she looked upon the cards.

The mysterious and solemn manner of this new Pythia struck Charlotte as rather comic.

Madam Fanny's features became more and more excited, and her great dazzling eyes opened wider and wider.

At last she breathed profoundly, and said in sharp accents—

“I see here much that is dark and inexplicable, and the little that I can unfold seems to have no significance or connection. The queen stands by the beggar, cross and crown strive together with varying skill and result, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace, early death and long life, lie side by side without distinction. The one will not yield to the other, so that I”—and here she cast a shy glance at the veiled lady,—“can tell nothing more of your future from these cards than that your fate will consist of strange contrasts—to-day rich, to-morrow poor, happy to-day, to-morrow most wretched.”

Charlotte said, smilingly, “Yes, yes, madam, your cards only tell me what I have long known. My past also has consisted of these ever-varying forms. To-day I am clothed in purple, to-morrow in a beggar's robe. Why should not this continue always? There is no day which does not impose a new fate upon me, so that those who saw me yesterday do not recognise me to-day.”

The fortune-teller looked at her with wide-stretched eyes during this inexplicable speech. Charlotte, who was only occupied with the present, and who was in feverish anxiety for fear of being found out, now said, half in real, half in assumed dejection—

“Yes, dear Madam Fanny, it is even as I tell you, and if you knew what I, a young and inexperienced girl, have had to bear, you would certainly have compassion upon me. The future would not trouble me, if now, while I am young and full of life, I could have better days.”

The old woman listened to these words most earnestly, and said with affected emotion—

“Speak! Open your young heart to me, my sweet, precious Fraulein. I was a young girl once myself, and I know that, at that age, one is often more sorrowful and more forlorn, than our

blooming cheeks and costly clothing would lead the world to think possible.

"Yes, love has often prepared an early grave for many a young life. A youthful heart in its inexpressible longings does not know how to help or counsel itself, and prefers suffering and death to seeking faithful assistance."

"How!—you do not believe—that I—" stammered Charlotte, with overpowering terror, betraying, in spite of the thick veil, the fearful struggle between the terror of exposing herself and her anxiety to preserve her secret, that Madame Fanny was convinced she had before her some unhappy love-sick girl, and now her pitiful heart could no longer be restrained—a swift stream of eloquence burst from her lips. Such warmth of unselfish sympathy was touchingly manifested, that it was difficult to decide which was the greatest actress, the renowned Charlotte Ackerman or the fortune-teller at Kugelsort.

Charlotte was at last obliged to yield to the persuasions of this compassionate woman.

With apparent reluctance she allowed her whole heart's secrets to be enticed from her. When Fanny believed she knew enough to make a constellation to her own advantage, she assumed the mien of an injured and yet kind friend.

"Delicacy forbids me to ask your name and rank, though evidently, if I knew them, I could give you better counsel. But I still hope to deserve your confidence, and in a few days I hope you will discover that you have turned to the right friend for counsel.

"Listen now, Fraulein, to my advice. If your family, as you say, is so violently opposed to you, you must, above all things, convince your lover that you are true and constant to him. I offer you a room in my house, where you can meet. But you cannot conceal from me your lover's name; that I must know in order to be able to serve you."

"That is not my intention," said Charlotte, hesitating. "Would it be possible for you to give him a letter this evening?"

"A letter! Oh, certainly," gladly said the Portuguese, with only half-concealed joy at the rapid progress she was making. Her eyes sparkled with curiosity and greed.

"At Kaisershof?"

"Yes, I know the house."

"Ask there for a Danish officer, Herr von Sylberg."

"Syl"—the word died upon the old woman's lips.

"Herr von Sylberg," repeated Charlotte, without remarking Fanny's surprise.

The fortune-teller, however, recovered herself instantly, and without turning her eyes from the veiled lady she grasped the letter, and said, in an assured tone, "Good, my Fraulein; I understand such commissions. Herr von Sylberg shall read your letter this evening."

"You may be assured of my thanks," said Charlotte, joyfully.

Once again Madam Fanny fixed her eyes upon the unknown, and a triumphant smile passed over her yellow face, and this time it was more than curiosity, more than greed, which gave lustre to her eyes.

When Charlotte rose to go, she could scarcely get rid of the importunities of the Portuguese to remain. She insisted at all events upon being allowed to arrange the cards once more.

"No, no, my gracious Fraulein, I cannot allow you to leave me now; wait, wait at least till I have questioned my cards once more. Now that you have given me your confidence, I am convinced that my art will not be in vain."

Gathering up the cards, she began to mix them so rapidly that Charlotte could scarcely follow her movements. She arranged the same figure, covered them with the red cloth, and directed Charlotte to remove it. They were now arranged in the form of a double cross.

The fortune-teller looked at them carefully. Suddenly her grave face was illuminated. She stared at Charlotte with distended eyes, and exclaimed, in a tone of joyful surprise:

"Ah, what wondrous conjectures! Now listen, my Fraulein, to every word I shall speak.

"My cards tell me that you need only be firm and your path in life will be strewn with the roses of love and the laurels of fame. You must stand fast.

"Your lover has many enemies, who speak evil of him; three men are lying in wait for him; an old woman is hostile, and will be yet more so; then, a young man and a young woman hate him equally.

"But your bridegroom does not turn aside from his path; he is a stately and brave cavalier, and will be faithful to you, even unto death.

"Never believe the evil that is said of him. The more you love him the better he will be.

"Take courage, Fraulein! Over the bridge under which no water flows, you will reach your goal, and will be a thousand times happier than now. But you will have much to endure.

"Among other things you will fall from a high tower which you never ascended. But all at last will end well, though the result will not be what you now wish and hope."

Charlotte found all this shower of words so insipid and absurd that she was heartily glad to be released by paying another silver thaler.

Madam Fanny accompanied her to the house door, and wished to attend her to the end of the street, which she did not allow; though, she confessed to herself, that it required much courage and more levity for a young girl of good standing to pass alone, at this hour of the night, through this degraded part of the city.

With a triumphant glance the Portuguese watched her as she hastened away and disappeared in the darkness.

"Good-night! Good-night, Mademoiselle Ackerman! Could any one have believed that this celebrated actress could not have concealed herself better? Truly, she did hide her face from me. Ha! ha! Sir Baron! I have a bait for my pike, and I will draw him into my net."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN old Grecian fable tells us of a happiness so complete, so overflowing in its fullness that it hovered over a man like a prognostication of approaching misfortune.

The wise men who know the history of the earth and the dark purposes of the heavens, turn away with fearful presentiments from the portions of the kings, to whom the gods deny no favor, because they intend their destruction.

We do not know how this antique belief in a Providence which scatters upon those heads consecrated to swift destruction, a golden rain of blissful enjoyments, agreed with Sylberg's philosophy and knowledge of the world. But this much we can say, that his hot blood and his boundless desires, did not shrink back timidly from any amount of gratification, and his levity and vanity were seeking ever new adventures. And yet his ardent imagination was not ardent enough; his bold presumption was not bold enough to enable him to receive Charlotte's letter from the hands of Madam Fanny without that mingled feeling of distrust and surprise with which we generally receive a happiness which leaves us nothing more to wish for, and has possibly gone even beyond our wildest hopes. A letter! No, he dare not trust his eyes! And if it was indeed so, had she not written to him in mockery or sport?

The letter, written in French, contained neither more or less than a full confession of her love, and a touching prayer to leave her rather to endure eternal death than to deceive her heart.

"I believe I may dare to write to one to whom I am allowed to speak. I know but one sacrifice which would be difficult to make. Can you deceive me? Can you destroy my soul by treachery? I should cease to live if the glorious light of day should show me one fault in you which my love would not find lovely and attractive.

"Max! By your pure and noble image, which I have in my

heart, I entreat you, protect me by your love, and by your virtues, give me a joyful belief in you."

It was some time before Sylberg could enter into the spirit of this language, this strange, fanatical enthusiasm.

Charlotte's letter disconcerted him; he was compelled often to recall the image of the sweet writer to obtain the correct comprehension of her words; but even then the letter left a strange and powerful impression, and made his relations to Charlotte seem enigmatical.

He had, when writing to Charlotte, expected a struggle, probably, without a successful result, and the thought of being disdained and rejected by Charlotte, did not wound his vanity for a single moment.

Certainly, he had never in earnest sought anything more than a new variation to an old theme. This unconditional resignation, this sentimental ardor disconcerted him, and in the beginning he scarcely knew what would come of it.

Suddenly he saw himself in the complete and undisputed possession of a girl's heart, who was not only a model of pure womanhood, but who had reached a height in art to which no other woman had attained. She was renowned for her purity of morals and manners, and was, indeed, considered rather prudishly reserved.

What were all his other conquests of other days to this?

And Charlotte's manner in advancing to meet him; she, who from simple timidity before the Argus eyes of the world had scarcely dared to look upon a strange man! What new spirit controlled this maiden and led her thoughtlessly into a love affair by the aid of an unworthy person such as Madam Fanny?

"Oh, woman! woman! who can fathom you?" cried Sylberg. "I thought I knew you thoroughly, with all your great and small artifices, your affected and natural attributes, and with this knowledge I lost all interest in you; and now, when I thought that role played out, comes this little dame, and I am standing rigid and dumb, as if the hen had eaten my crumbs, and I did not know what to do next.

"Love, with fire and flame, that is of course, understood ; but what shall be the end of it ?

"Will she marry me? Impossible! That cannot be her purpose ; she is much too discreet, too sensible for that ; besides, her family have already taken pains to paint me to her in glowing colors. What then ? Perhaps she will simply make a fool of me ! Mordio ! Mademoiselle, you had better let that alone !"

Every possible conjecture and imagination crossed in his feverishly excited brain ; he felt as helpless and timid as if this had been his first love adventure ; his cheeks glowed, his heart beat violently ; he sprang from the divan and ordered a bottle of champagne.

The wine filled his veins with new fire. Soon, however, his reason prevailed, the uncomfortable realities which surrounded him vanished like a mist from before his eyes ; he forced his imagination into its accustomed realms, and his emotions resumed their accustomed tenor.

When he had finished the bottle, he had found his best friend in life, the light-minded, frivolous Sylberg, compounded of vain self-deception and false romance.

He tore open his uniform—vest, frills and all—pressed Charlotte's letter passionately to his bosom, and cried :

"This is present love, life—bliss ! What care I for the future ? Come what will, I hold fast to what is mine ! We will see who will contest with me !

"Heavenly Charlotte ! Yes, you shall be loved as only a mortal can love ; stormily ; tenderly ; fiery as *Ætna's* lava ; soft as a May morning. You shall reign unconditionally over this heart, its only queen.

"But why do I hesitate ? Every moment that I lose is a crime against myself, my earthly Paradise.

"Up, then, trifle ! and away to Kugelsort !"

Madam Fanny did not expect him till the next day, but his impatience drove him to her at once.

The moon was shining brightly, as Sylberg, wrapped in his mantle, left the hotel with hasty steps.

In the neighborhood of the Ellernthorbridge, as he was about to enter a side street, he met a lady who was accompanied by a servant bearing a lantern ; as she passed him, he heard her ask the servant in Danish, the time of night. The voice was most familiar to him ; he paused involuntarily, and looked after her.

“ Who was that ? ” he stammered, in an alarmed voice. “ I believe it was little Frances. The same figure also. Right ! she turns the nearest way to— ”

He hastened after her, driven by curiosity and alarm : he followed at some distance, and saw her turn towards Lindenkron's ; and now the last doubt disappeared from his mind ; he saw the porter open the door and admit Frances and her companion.

Sylberg remained for a few moments, as if rooted to the earth, before the well-known house ; and it was some time before he recalled what had driven him out. The discovery that Ulrika had returned to Hamburg was most unexpected.

He, who a moment before had been full of bold, proud plans, now felt as if a hostile hand had seized him, so great was his fear at the presence of this woman, who knew him to the innermost fold of his heart.

“ Curses, curses ! ” muttered he, between his teeth. “ What is she doing here ? What evil star has led her to cross my path now, the intriguer ! now, when I would least of all, be reminded of the old story ? ”

“ She is cunning ; yes, I know the serpent ! and, at last, she will learn what she must never know, unless I am willing to lose my game. ”

After this short soliloquy, the Baron, like a cowardly warrior, turned his back upon his enemy before he had even looked her in the face, and took to flight.

He flew in the direction of Kugelsort, considering how he could best turn aside these dangerous obstacles in the way of his new plans with Charlotte ; but in spite of his inventive genius, he could think of no means to outwit the Countess Ulrika, and carry on his new adventure happily.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE die had now fallen for Charlotte, not only over her love, but over her life; with such a heart as hers, this was synonymous.

No sooner had she with bold hand loosened the cable which held her little tottering frail boat, to the firm shore, than her heart was free and peaceful.

Fearless, she saw herself driven by an unknown stream into an unknown sea, where her courage, in storms, on rocks and clefts, and her love, in its faith in her good star, should be sorely tried.

Now, for the first time in this strange element, did she believe she had found what she had so often longed for; what with anxious eagerness she had in vain sought in her young life. This inexplicable longing had prevented her ever feeling firmly fixed within the round of her daily life and customs. Even her art, for which she glowed with an exalted enthusiasm, would never fill this void in her soul. Surrounded always with ideals and the imaginary pictures of poets, living with them, losing, as it were, herself in them, looking upon art as the noblest theme, the purest enjoyment for heart and intellect, her natural character was almost lost in the sweet and magical garden of poesy, and only in that impetuous thirst, to which she knew not how to give a name, did she find, from time to time, that, between the creations, and the actual experiences of her heart, in pleasure and pain, there was a vast difference. The realities of life might be refined and graced by poetry, but the latter alone could never fill the heart.

No wonder that a heart so full of life's fiery impulses should seek its liberty and enjoyment in such feelings and in an engagement with a man whose whole nature was in uncouth and rugged contrast to her own character. The stormy and

passionate temperament of Sylberg was as attractive to her as his unaffected and imposing personality.

Up to this time she had only known men who had brought their homage to the celebrated actress, who knew how to appreciate her intellect and art.

The Baron, on the contrary, gave the preference to her personal charms and forgot everything else in her presence ; he was charmed by her beauty, grace and amiability ; in short, his conduct to her was more that of an elegant courtier than of an æsthetic admirer or an art enthusiast.

So Sylberg, with a rapidity amazing to himself, had won the heart of this young girl.

But the highest part of Charlotte's nature turned away from him with dissatisfaction and distrust, and struggled against an affection which, while it flattered her vanity, had never touched the secret harmonies of her soul. At last, however, Love, the conquerer, conquered her genius, and soon reigned with consuming power over the pure young artist whose soul had been consecrated to the modest muses.

The Major did not allow her to wait long for his answer. The next evening, as she walked to the theatre for the rehearsal, she was met by a woman, in almost threadbare garments, who beckoned her into a dark passage, pressed a letter into her hand, and disappeared instantly. At the first glance, Charlotte knew the address to be Sylberg's, and in terror concealed the letter in her dress.

Later in the evening, in a dark corner of the stage, she drew it out unnoticed, and with a trembling heart her eye flew over the lines written by her beloved.

It was the tender, touching speech of a heart drunk with bliss. Every word breathed the rapture of love.

He assured her of the purity and constancy of his love, and entreated her to grant him an interview at the house in Kugelsort, where she could assure him personally of her love.

"Oh, I knew, yes, I knew he was good and noble," said Charlotte, her heart trembling with joy.

"If he was not good, he could not write as he does ; none but the best men feel unworthy of their good fortune.

"Yes, yes, I always said so. On the sunniest mountains rest generally the darkest storm clouds."

But the proposition to a meeting at the fortune teller's made her timorous. "That cannot be ; he has not well considered that," she said to herself. "Once in dire need I sought this woman, but now, thank God, she is not necessary to my happiness."

Upon nearer consideration she found herself almost as helpless as she had been the day before, when she wished to send her letter to her lover. Nowhere but at Kugelsort did it seem possible to appoint an interview.

But no, she had thought of something better, and a ray of hope penetrated her thoughts. She would confide in Frau Unzer, and place herself and her love under the protection of this good and tried friend. Charlotte hesitated but for a moment. She trembled at the thought of a confession which she would have joyfully proclaimed to the whole world.

But when was a tender and overflowing heart long embarrassed as to its confidant ? Who could deserve this confidence more than her sympathizing friend ?

"She is the only one who understands me. She alone has done Sylberg justice. Even if she disliked him, like the rest, I could still convince her that he is the only one to whom I could give myself in joy and sorrow."

A heavy weight seemed to fall from her heart, and she could scarcely wait for the evening to seek her friend. It is the privilege of a beautiful spirit that it penetrates lightly and without effort into other pure souls, and pierces, with clear and loving eyes, their most profound emotions. We have before endeavored to paint the charming intercourse which existed between the old Frau and Charlotte Ackerman. They seemed to create together a double life, old age, with the rosy hue of youth still lingering around it, youth, glorified by the soft evening glow of old age. And now, added to this, the golden atmosphere of love !

Unzer's mother could not utter a single word when she first heard Charlotte's confession. Great was her astonishment and terror that that should have taken place which she had before conceived probable.

In the common events of life, even when unexpected, she was calm and firm, and her clear view of distant objects was rarely dimmed. But those cases in which love played a prominent part were an exception; her emotions were violent, and she felt helpless, and irresolute.

Her youth had been passed in a moderate and insipid age, poor in poetry and romance, when every liberal and ardent feeling of her heart was considered a crime against the prevailing code of morals. She knew nothing, therefore, of the romantic side of love. At that time, in regard to all intercourse between the sexes, there reigned a sort of pedantic feeling. It was a time of heavy chests, and enormous linen wardrobes, which held the trousseaus.

The young people knew no other emotions than those which had been maturely weighed in solemn family council, through double marriage contracts circumstantially inserted and concluded by the touching and Christian blessing of all the nurses and cousins of the connection.

The young people, who were selected for each other, loved with as much tender decency and moderation as the life-sized marionettes, in the so-called "Booth Comedies."

This remembrance of her own early days, notwithstanding her liberal ideas and poetical nature, almost necessitated an anxious reserve on the part of the good Frau Unzer. In considering the views and principles of that day, commonly called the sentimental "Werther period," she could not comprehend the diseased and progressive impulse of the young generation, after sentimental feelings and world-storming Titanic struggles.

She recalled the peaceful, almost slavish piety with which the young people of her day bowed down to the commands of their parents, under Hymen's rosy sceptre.

The old Frau was therefore, in the beginning, speechless.

She would as soon have expected the heavens to fall, as that Charlotte should be seized with the modern disease of sentimental love, she who, heretofore, had only glowed for her art and its ideals.

And to make her astonishment complete, it must be exactly this Sylberg, whom Charlotte had, but a few days before, denounced.

No, this was too difficult to realize ; and the consciousness that she had unintentionally contributed to bring about this result produced a sort of guilty confusion ; so that it was indeed difficult to decide which of the two women most needed consolation and encouragement from the other.

It was very difficult for Charlotte to convince the old lady that this was not at all to be considered as an established love affair, but that her peace of mind demanded that she should understand her own heart and that of the Baron. The widow Unzer was very timid as to extending her protection to the lovers in any way. She had become so anxious and perplexed that Charlotte saw she would not attain her object without making use of a little strategy. She assumed, therefore, a tone of decision, which she thought would be more effective than prayers and caresses.

“ Good ! You will not assist me, Sophie ? Well, then, I will assist myself ! I must speak to the Major ; and Madam Fanny, at Kugelsort, to whom you once jestingly referred me, will know how to arrange it.”

“ Heavens, Charlotte ! what horrible words !” cried the old Frau, shuddering. “ You, a respectable and cultivated woman, would take such a step as this, and yet wish me to believe that this is not a love affair ! Unhappy child ! what shall I think of you ? Either you are insane, or I have lost my reason.”

“ But wait till I see if I can find no other resource. The Baron is firmly resolved to speak with you ! Well, perhaps if that is all, it may be arranged.”

“ That is all. What else could there be ?” said Charlotte, laughing. “ I will see him here in this room, for half an hour,

to convince myself if I dare trust to the assurances of his letter."

"How? in a half-hour you will learn to know a man? Ah! Lotte! I fear the half hour will be too limited."

Frau Unzer agreed at last, though with a heavy heart, that Charlotte should meet the Major at her house the following evening; that after this interview all intercourse should be given up, or the affair submitted to the authority of the mother.

She submitted to these conditions gladly. Charlotte was now the happiest of the happy! She thanked her kind friend tenderly, and in the rapture of her own bliss she scarcely remarked how grave and thoughtful was the widow.

The thought of her own beloved son, and the destruction of his hopes, made her sad, and then a dark, mysterious something, to which she could give no name, cast a cloud about her. That her friend had become suddenly much less favorable to Sylberg, made at first but little impression upon Charlotte. It was not the first time that the old Frau had bitterly reproached herself as to love affairs which had taken place in her own special circle; her calm and harmonious temperament was adverse to all such storms of passion and despair, and it was incomprehensible to her how the young people of the present day would, without any necessity, thus destroy all the beautiful, joyous, youthful time. "The charming but pernicious Werther is responsible for all this mischief," was her constant outcry, and the future head of German literature was no special favorite in her eyes.

The old lady made little suggestions against Sylberg on this point and that, till at last Charlotte said angrily, "I cannot understand you, Sophie; a few days ago the Baron had no warmer friend and advocate than yourself."

"We have only changed roles," said the old Frau, in a displeased tone. "Think what you will of my judgment of strange men, but if I had suspected the Baron to be capable of such pranks, he would never have crossed my threshold."

"His indifference and nonchalance towards women made him amiable in my eyes; I gave him credit for too much manly

gravity and solidity of character to have any taste for moonshine romance. I was convinced he had long ago turned aside from all superfluities of sentiment.

"And you will marry this man, Lotte? In the whole world there are not two people who differ more radically with each other.

"What is really his profession? Riding, recruiting, exercising, enlisting; added to this, a considerable amount of bravado. In these things consists his life's calling, Lotte; how can such a life be in unison with your own?"

"But is this the most important question?" replied Charlotte. "Must I really only give my heart to a man of my profession? If so, Eckhof is the only one I know who would seem suited to me, and he is old enough to be my father.

"The military have, I confess, but little to do with art, but how would it be if I married a merchant, or a senator, or a physician, or a pastor? Remember, Sophie," said she laughing, "how many times you have told me that in happy marriages the only cause of dispute was, whether the children most resembled the father or mother!"

"There it is!" exclaimed the old Frau, clasping her hands despairingly together. "Father, mother, children, eh! Mademoiselle! It is plainly to be seen that you can pass admirably from one scene to another! But it has been happily ordained that the trees cannot grow up into the heavens.

"I swear to you, Lotte, your Major—ah! you need not make such eyes at me!—your Major shall have a crabbed reception from me, and I will turn the cold shoulder to him properly. And now, Lotte, I charge you, play no comedy with your own heart, or I will hiss you till you lose both sight and hearing."

"So, then, I will at least go down under thunder and lightning," replied Charlotte, smiling.

She promised, however, to do all that her too suspicious friend desired, in this important matter.

CHAPTER XXV.

STRANGE to say, on the day in which Sylberg received the invitation to take tea with Frau Unzer, he had lost both courage and confidence as to his good fortune with Charlotte, and even the expectation of meeting her there could not dissipate his distrust.

He had sent Olaf out at an early hour for information, and he had returned with the certain confirmation of Sylberg's belief, that the Countess Lindenkron had returned to Hamburg to remain permanently.

It happens more frequently in life than is generally supposed, that men who exercise no self-restraint over their passions, are suddenly warned by some unforeseen event that the last falsehood and crime of their hearts has not been absolved, and that one or other of the old tough fibres of their souls still hangs firmly on that faith in a higher power which they had long considered delusive and a mockery.

Ulrika had returned to Hamburg—but why should this event make a man of Sylberg's character so cowardly, so indecisive? There seemed to be no cause for fear in his present social relations; he felt as if hemmed in on every side, and his proud assurances of success were changed to embarrassment and uncertainty, a state of feeling which he had not for a long time experienced; he saw now how much he had to risk by having his name publicly connected with such a girl as Charlotte Ackerman.

It was the dark consciousness of his old crime and its Nemesis which threw its hostile shadow in his path, and aroused that feeling of distrust in himself which, in important moments, impedes and palsies us.

In this restless agitation and confusion Sylberg arrived at Frau Unzer's, where he found Charlotte awaiting him.

The timidity, so at variance with his ordinary bearing, the

pallor of his countenance, and the great agitation of his manner, influenced the good Frau immediately in his favor. She could not but feel confidence in the power of a passion which ruled so completely over this adroit worldling and robbed him of his self-control.

The modest manner of the Baron allayed her anxieties, and the confident and flashing eyes of Charlotte, who maintained her composure fully, quieted her apprehensions.

"I can surely leave them alone for awhile," thought she. Upon some pretence she took advantage of the first opportunity to rise, and left the room.

They were now alone. Sylberg recovered his old courage, and with it his old tone of ardent ecstasy. He seized Charlotte's hand in stormy passion, and, covering it with kisses, cried out as if drunk with happiness :

"It is true, then ! I can once more have faith in my good star. Once more open this heavily burthened heart to those bright hopes which are so oft deceitful.

"Oh, Charlotte, what mighty power lies at your command, that you have drawn me back into the magic circle of love ? I who have abjured its dominion ? I who have sought a compensation for my lost golden dreams of bliss in gloomy animosity and bitter scorn of the world and mankind ?

"It seems as if the fantasies and illusions of my youth had returned, and opened to my dazzled eyes the glorious world of poesy. To me, the cold man of the world, who had long ago forgotten or unlearned all that relates to love and its delights. And all this sunny happiness comes through you.

"You, you alone, Charlotte, can explain to me this enigma. How was this possible ? Either this is a sweet enchantment and I do not know myself, or love has now for the first time taken possession of my inmost being, and all that I have heretofore suffered on love's account was a deception.

"Let that be so, Sylberg," whispered Charlotte, "but the truth of our love will enable us to overcome all the vain decep-

tions and mistakes of the world, and in this struggle we will learn to appreciate properly its truth and strength."

"Away with all doubt and despair!" exclaimed Sylberg, falling on his knees before her.

"One glance into my Charlotte's soft eyes, and every pain and grief, every deception of my past life, is extinguished in glad rapture. I have found an ardent glowing soul which I can call my own precious treasure. How foolish, how presumptuous, was this pride with which I sought to flee from you! Why did I not bow down freely, gladly, under the weight of your magical charms?"

"Here! here, at your feet, is my proper place, heavenly maiden. Command your willing slave, and only allow me to rule over your heart when obedience shall seem sweeter to you than the exercise of your power."

"No, no, my dear Max, you alone shall rule and I will follow, and will obey you as my only lord.

"I knew long ago, Sylberg, that nothing could save me from your power; that every path in which I would seek anxiously to flee from you would lead me back irrecoverably to your arms.

"How can one flee from a man who is more charming and irresistible in the terror he inspires than in his strength and beauty, and who—oh, what sacrilege!—after he had subdued a loving heart, disdained it, and wished to bestow upon another that which justly and before God belonged to him alone."

"Let then my repentance be equal to my guilt," said Sylberg, throwing his arm around the fragile girl, and covering the rosy lips, which had just confessed so sweet a secret, with fiery kisses.

Charlotte allowed the repentant sinner to complete his stormy penance without opposition, then with crimson cheeks, she exclaimed smiling:

"Max! Max! what savage ferocity! and the rough beard besides! If you call that a penance, I do not know what you would call crime."

"That every breath I draw is not consecrated to you, that

every pulse of my heart does not testify of my ardent love, this alone will be crime in my eyes. Yes, Charlotte, now that I am absolutely thine, I will fear nothing more, and that savage ferocity which you found in my kisses, will become unconquerable courage in the face of any enemy who dares to dispute my right to you. This I swear !”

“Hold ! no oath, beloved !” she said tenderly. “Having found each other, darling, we will certainly find the way to walk hand in hand through life. With such oaths we sometimes summon an evil fate, which, if uncalled for, would remain unknown. Let us trust with glad hearts to our good star, which has conducted us so far favorably, and in every danger rely upon my courage, even as upon my love. I am yours, I will be only and eternally yours ! This is my only oath !”

She pressed a kiss upon his lips and gazed in his eyes with so deep, so dazzling a glance, she seemed to illumine his inmost soul ; she laid her warm, soft cheek upon his brow and said : “Up, Max, before my old friend returns. You shall never kneel again before your Charlotte, unless you have sinned so heavily, that only in this humble position do you dare hope for pardon.”

Sylberg looked up at her absently and rose with a half suppressed sigh. So sudden and marked a change of feeling could not escape Charlotte’s eye. Grave and thoughtful rested his glance upon her ; a cloud of doubt and heavy anxiety shadowed his brow ; now he shook his head with a painful smile, and pressed his hand convulsively upon his heart. She entreated him tenderly to make known the cause of his distress. At first he resisted, then, as if no longer master of his inward emotions, he sprang up impetuously, and clasping both her hands, exclaimed :

“You have just asked, my Charlotte, why I am sad. I, upon the dizzy height of earthly happiness, ought not to tremble at the abyss, which threatens to engulf my new-found happiness ! Oh my prophetic heart, what demons of anguish have still power over me ? Charlotte, Charlotte ! I am indeed wholly thine,

but will you ever be mine? Will those, who are nearest to you, ever grant me this precious boon? Your brother, your mother, will they not use all their influence to make you hesitate?

This question was so unexpected to Charlotte, that it frightened her, and for a moment she lost her self-control. In the tumult of her feelings, and blinded by the power this man exercised over her, she had forgotten this danger: the anger, the struggle, the perhaps unconquerable opposition on the part of her family.

She trembled at his prophetic words, and all the angry scenes she had already endured at home on his account, came back to her memory.

Charlotte was, however, only agitated for a moment; she recovered quickly her joyful assurance and said gaily:

"It must be true, that we women have a certain sort of courage that men have no conception of, possibly, we win a sort of talisman in happy love which protects us in all dangers, while you can only show courage and energy in other triumphs. You have neither heroism or perseverance, in a contest with the world for our sakes! Ah! sweet friend, what sort of cowardice do you attribute to me? Can all the world, combined, make me falter in the constancy of my love to you? Have I not been exercised from my childhood in the deepest tragedies, and now, when there is a little earnestness and decision necessary, shall I leave my buskin? God forbid! Perhaps, Sylberg, you believe that, because I am an actress and have many roles to play, I will play a comedy with my own heart? — No! No! you cannot think that of your Charlotte, for you know that my heart would break a thousand times over, before it could be inconstant."

The Baron seemed not only soothed, but enraptured by this assurance. He had now but one anxiety—where should he see his beloved in future? After short musing on this point, Charlotte said:

"Our friend, who has so magnanimously left us alone, that we may make bare our hearts to each other, will scarcely afford us another opportunity. But this is indeed unnecessary. In

my own home there are many quiet spots where we can be alone when it pleases us."

"But how shall I enter your house?" said the Baron, visibly surprised, indeed confused.

"Certainly over the threshold," cried Charlotte, laughing. "In the morning, at breakfast, I will announce you to my mother. You will come to the house about four in the afternoon, and I will present you to my family as my bridegroom; than all will be finished!"

Sylberg completely lost his presence of mind at this proposition, and scarcely knew how to reply, and Charlotte could not comprehend, how a man of the world could show so little self-confidence, when the door to his happiness stood open before him.

"No! no! dear Charlotte, that cannot be. Think of the dangers which would surround us, if your family should refuse their consent, or should annex to it some conditions, not in my power to fulfil?"

"What could they be," stammered Charlotte, much confused. "I am firmly assured, that no one will lay any serious obstacles in our path, if we only show ourselves decided."

"Can you think, Charlotte, that my courage would fail at the right moment?" said the Major in a faltering tone and embracing her tenderly, "then you do not know this glowing heart. Truly, I can never be justly reproached with too great an amount of patience. What actually withholds me from throwing myself at your mother's feet and praying for her blessing, is only an outside consideration; but not, therefore, less important for me. Believe me, my sweet love, no one detests as much as I do, that tyrannical law, which punishes by cassation any Danish officer, who marries without the king's consent. But such is the law, and my honor and my duty require me to obey it."

"And, if the king refuses his consent?"

"He will not refuse," said Sylberg firmly, "his personal affection for me, and the name of Charlotte Ackerman, my

sweet, renowned child, assures me of his consent. But, if for some unknown reason, the king should refuse his permission, it is in my power to resign my commission, and thus overcome that obstacle."

"Listen, Max! I have thought of a middle way," said Charlotte, "by which we can see and speak with each other, until you receive his Majesty's consent. It is only necessary to conceal our love from the world till that time, and that is easy to accomplish. My mother and sister must know our secret, they must grant that our engagement shall be kept a secret, and you shall visit us as a friend of the family; this will not seem remarkable to any one."

The Major mused for a moment and then answered gaily: "Yes! yes! it shall be so. I will come to-morrow, notwithstanding the danger that Herr Schröder may take me for a muffled stage-reviewer and critic. Love, in spite of his blindness, is a good shot and an admirable diplomatist."

The conversation was interrupted by Frau Unzer. She knew by her first glance at Charlotte, that the lovers fully understood each other; she had tact enough, however, to look innocent, and scolded the Major for not becoming a happy married man in place of remaining an old bachelor. Sylberg kissed her hand respectfully and promised repentance and amendment. Other friends soon gathered around the tea-table of the old lady, and she thanked God in her heart, that this interview, which had taken place under her roof and protection, had gone off so happily.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON the following morning, Dorothea was the first person in the house whom Charlotte informed of her engagement with Sylberg; this was done so quietly, so decisively, that she could not doubt the intelligence for a moment, neither could she conceal her surprise and alarm.

"You have done that?" she cried. "Oh, Heavens! this unhappy delusion will make you wretched, Charlotte! Sylberg your bridegroom—he whom I can never look upon without a secret terror?"

"You should not say that to me, my love," replied the younger sister, softly. "My heart has chosen this man, and in thus following the voice of my feelings, I look onward cheerfully to my fate, and tremble not before this or that dark possibility. It may be that there are trials before me equal to the greatness of my love; but for what purpose is life, if we cannot bear our fate for love's sake?"

"I entreat you, therefore, dear Dorta, take at least no part in the hostile opposition which the world will make to my happiness. If you cannot help me, do not be against me; do not make my position more difficult than it will soon surely be!"

"But mother! brother! what will they say to this engagement?" cried Dorothea, who was much moved by Lotte's imploring words.

"That we will soon know; as I am fully resolved to confess all to mother, to-day," replied Charlotte, calmly. "I feel assured of her consent, as she knows by herself and my father, what strange fates sometimes unite two hearts. And Fritz! Well, if it must be so, I will struggle with him till he yields; and in the last extremity, I will call in the aid of Doctor Unzer; he is all-powerful with him."

"I advise you never to do that," said her sister, with a half sly, half painful smile. "I know Unzer's opinion of the Major, perfectly; better perhaps, than you know the Doctor himself.

“Do not count upon his assistance. Unzer, love—” her cheeks became crimson, and the trembling of her voice betrayed her emotion—“Unzer will never yield you to Sylberg, or any other man, be he who he may!”

“What wild words are these, Dorta; can you seriously believe that Unzer is jealous of the Major—he who has never manifested for me any other feeling than that of the purest friendship?”

“In this light and no other, will the love of any noble man always appear to you,” replied her sister, seeking in vain to conceal her emotion. “But why do I try to remove doubts which you do not entertain? You must be blind, indeed, if you have not long ago remarked that Unzer loves you with his whole heart, and even for that reason cannot endure the Major.”

Two great burning tears fell from her eyes at these words; and shuddering, she threw herself in her sister’s arms, exclaiming:

“Now you have made him forever unhappy; you have preferred to him, a man that you scarcely know, and whose character inspired you, but a short time since, with great distrust.

“Ah, Charlotte! I was prepared for all! I could even think of your marriage with Unzer with a certain satisfaction, resolved not to envy you his love. But to sacrifice him to this Sylberg! No, I cannot understand that! I scarcely know for whom I should tremble most, for you or for him! For him whom you disdain and whom I love more than my life. Yes, yes,” she continued, with an elevated voice and a countenance almost glorified; “no more disguises! I need no longer conceal a love which absorbs my whole being; and which, if you had become Unzer’s wife, would have gone with me to my grave as the only secret I had kept from Lotte. But I beseech you, sister, by all the holy and beautiful things which have united our hearts, do not make Unzer wretched!

“Believe me, he is more worthy of you than any other man, and you—you are the only woman who can make him as happy as he deserves to be.

"No, no, you cannot, you dare not love any other than him. It is not possible that a man like Sylberg can be preferred to him. He is noble and distinguished, and he will make you the happiest and most envied wife in all this wide world."

Charlotte gazed at her sister in astonishment, and felt as if she must fall upon her knees and worship her as some exalted being. She was profoundly touched by this evidence of a love which was joyfully ready to offer up itself to secure the happiness of another. She could scarcely comprehend such self-renunciation. Tears gushed from her eyes, and she exclaimed—

"No, by heavens! If Unzer can disdain such a heart, then love no longer exists in the world, or rather it never has existed; and only blind fools have believed in the power of sympathy.

"How, Dorta, you wish me to love this man for whom you cherish this profound affection! You wish that I, because he has not perhaps shown you the same attention he has manifested for me, should strengthen him in his error, and bind him more firmly to myself. But would not this make us all wretched, you sister, myself, and him?

"No, let us obey the voice of truth which animates our souls. I have sworn to be true to Sylberg; he possesses my whole heart, even as Unzer possesses yours.

"Would it not be a double treachery in me if I should desert him and rob you of the man you so truly love?

"Never! never! The will of God, which we so often presumptuously seek to correct, points out to us the object upon which our happiness blossoms. Onward, then! We will lead your Unzer into the right path, and he will soon discover to which of us he should give the preference."

"I do not understand you," said Dorothea, sorrowfully.

"That is not necessary," said Charlotte, with animation.

"Enough that I understand you, that I know assuredly how truly you love the Doctor.

"Yes, Dorta," she exclaimed, throwing her arms tenderly around her sister, "so certain as I will never forsake Sylberg,

just so certain shall Unzer be yours. He is the man to appreciate and understand such a heart.

"I myself will lead him in the right path! I will be security for it!

"You, however, Dorta, help me with your true sister-love to win my mother for Sylberg, that she may receive him kindly when he comes to-day to assure her of his love and fidelity."

She then informed her sister of the Major's wish that the engagement should be kept a secret for awhile, and explained his reasons for this.

Dorothea had but little to say against it, her only thought was of her mother, who, on this important occasion, would not be willing to set aside the common custom which good manners and birth had established.

"Your whole love history is so new and so peculiar that it seems to me that this last little exception to the general rule might also be accepted." She therefore promised her aid with words and kisses, in any difficulties which father and brother might make.

Frau Unzer was more surprised than perplexed by the announcement of her daughter's engagement to a Danish officer. And the impetuous, stern, and sometimes obstinate old lady received the intelligence more calmly than was expected.

She was silent some time, but listened with marked attention to Charlotte's history of her love, in so far as she thought it suited to her mother's ear.

Frau Ackerman was lost in profound thought, and Dorothea was compelled to call her attention several times before she remembered that the whole affair now depended on her consent.

"Ah, dear children, what can I say?" cried she, in comic perplexity. "This is certainly not such a party as I had hoped for you, Dorta."

"For me, best mother!" said she, with amazement.

"For you or for Lotte either," replied she, angrily tapping the lid of her silver snuff-box.

"I wish you both to marry men who represent something real in life—men of reputation and solidity. From love can no man live, as little as from nectar and ambrosia.

"After the honeymoon comes the bitter moon, which generally contains the proof of the marriage, and in which a woman learns how it is with the man."

In a tone half peevish, half tender the good matron went on to picture to her daughters the dangerous haste or levity in so important a step as marriage.

She had spoken more than half an hour without indicating whether she was more in favor of or against Charlotte's engagement with the Major. She appeared intentionally to avoid any explanation on this point. She was trying to gain time, and was as timid about her own decision as Charlotte herself.

Dorothea, who knew her mother well enough to dread her brother's influence, and from whose decision she believed Charlotte had everything to fear, turned the scale at last by saying:

"There are many unhappy marriages which are solemnized under the most favorable circumstances, and in which all the world prophesy a heaven on earth to the happy pair, and a perfect harmony of heart between man and wife through all time, and yet they are scarcely united when the reverse is fully manifested.

"On the contrary, there are many weddings over which the wise ones shake their heads, but which are accompanied through all the storms of life by good genii."

"I read once, in a theatre calendar, of a celebrated actress, a beautiful young widow, who gave a pretty sharp box on the ear to the man who afterwards became her second husband, when he first commenced his courtship; a few weeks later she became his happy wife. He was, after all, the right man," said Frau Ackerman, with a glance full of tenderness at the portrait of her second husband, which was hanging over the sofa.

Dorothea made use of the favorable moment which had thus

recalled to her mother the remembrance of her own happy love, and said to her sister :

“ Would Herr von Sylberg return again if you once dismissed him as our mother once dismissed father ? I can scarcely believe it. He does not look like a man who would offer himself up to that species of tenderness ; but you can put him to the proof to-day, if you wish.”

Without regarding the perplexity of the mother at this proposition, she went on with much humor, and without giving her time to make any objections, to relate that the Major, who would be presented to her to-day, was, contrary to the customs of Hamburg, compelled first to seek the King's permission to marry Charlotte, and that the mother's consent was not at all the question now ; so that she was not called upon to receive him to-day as her future son-in-law.

To this strange arrangement Frau Ackerman would not listen for a moment, and, after much persuasion on the part of the sisters, she was induced to consent to Sylberg's visiting the house as a friend of the family till the King's permission was obtained. This consent was given, however, on the condition that there should be no engagement between Charlotte and him—a contract which could not be declared before the whole world should not be recognised in her house !

She also declared that Schröder's opinion should first be heard, as his was properly the first voice in all that related to the honor and happiness of the house. This resolve filled Charlotte anew with the most anxious uncertainty.

How could she hope for a favorable decision from her brother ? His personal dislike to the Major was well known to her, and he would certainly oppose any arrangement which would banish her from the stage.

This last consideration was most painful to herself ; it was difficult for her to conceive that a time would come in which she must relinquish her art, the proper and true element of her intellectual life ; she had lived for her art, had seen in it the foundation-stone of her existence. Her mind misgave her, she

saw in this something inimical to her love, that love which must lead her into new paths and wholly change the current of her life.

Only when called upon to oppose the world, which was so hostile to her love, did the passion of her heart conquer the inborn genius of her soul.

But when she seriously thought of sacrificing her art, that mysterious internal power which binds the heart of the artist to his calling, which makes it almost impossible to relinquish it wholly, was aroused within her.

Charlotte's fears as to her brother were, indeed, well grounded. Schröder would have sooner expected the heavens to fall, than his sister's engagement to a man who was in every respect so odious to him. He was firm and stern in principle, not only in his every action, but in his judgment of other men. How was it possible for him to be friendly with a man of Sylberg's calling and personality?

He was devoted to his art, led an ever-active life as an actor, as a man of business, and in social life he exhibited the purest character and the most solid, sterling qualities; how could he be pleased with a man who seemed in many points of view to be only a gallant adventurer, and was by many described as a man of doubtful morality?

And yet, when, later in the day, his mother, in the presence of Dorothea, informed him of the important event, he maintained his outward composure, but the fearful impression which the intelligence made upon him did not escape them. But when he learned that on the evening before, a decisive interview had taken place between the lovers at Frau Unzer's, and that the Major, in consequence of this, would this evening be presented to the family of his bride, he sprung up in the most violent excitement, and exclaimed:

"And you can and will agree to this, mother?"

"I will listen to your counsel, my dear son," she said softly, but emphatically; "but it must be given without temper. This is not a question which relates in the first degree to us, or even

to Herr von Sylberg, but to your sister Charlotte, whose peace and happiness, yes, whose life itself may hang upon our decision.

"Therefore, for God's sake, no blind violence, no unmeasured temper! Charlotte's whole life and character show me that we may do more mischief by undue violence and haste than we can ever make good again."

The justice of this warning made an unmistakable impression upon Schröder. He kissed his mother's hand, and said with much emotion—

"You are right, dear mother; there is too much at stake for me to allow my hot blood to master me.

"You shall see me calm, mother; as calm as a man can be who sees suddenly before him a fearful presentiment in its more fearful consummation. How long have I trembled before that moment in which love would find its way to Charlotte's heart! There was in me an inexplicable presentiment which ever whispered that this would be a great misfortune for us all, a dark fatality which could never be banished.

"Often when I have looked upon her on the stage, and felt the mighty power of her tragic emotions, compared the tender form and sensitive nature with the demoniacal strength of her artist soul, I have asked myself what would be the result when those emotions and passions, which she represented so powerfully, should become living in her breast, and the fate of a disdained or deceived love should meet her elsewhere than on the stage, or in the costume of an Emilia or a Rutland."

"You are describing my own inmost fear," said Dorothea. "I could never imagine Charlotte in a love affair. I could never picture to myself the man who could inspire her with a true passion. No one who approached her awakened any interest. I was indeed often astonished at her utter indifference to distinguished and attractive men.

"Of this, Herr von Sylberg gives us certainly the best proof. I should not count him, however, amongst the distinguished and attractive men.

"Would any one have believed it possible that a girl of

Charlotte's intellect and cultivation would fall in love with a man who, even if he was in truth all he appears to be, could under the most favorable judgment be considered only an adroit man of the world, an agreeable fellow.

"How could he ever satisfy the rich intelligence and tender and profound feelings of our Lotte?"

"What a most miserable delusion!"

"She is worshipped as a pure muse by all noble and enthusiastic men, is regarded as a deified ideal of womanhood—she, and a recruiting officer!"

With his arms folded, and in the most feverish excitement, he paced the room. He had aroused the most conflicting emotions in the breast of his mother, who was now not in the condition to come to any calm conclusion.

Dorothea wished to avert any hasty plan by which they might hope to compel Charlotte, through stern measures, to give up Sylberg, and to break those bonds which had been scarcely united.

"That would be to throw oil on the flames," said she, as Schröder expressed some such view.

"How! would you goad on this passion to the most vehement excess? Forget not, I beseech you, that in dealing with Lotte, you have to deal with a mind diseased with an inexpressible longing; with a spirit, whose fiery enthusiasm knows no bounds; and with a heart, which has never understood the contradiction between itself and its love. The only thing I can advise, is calm composure on our side, but no authority, no violence. Give her full liberty to love Sylberg, and do not prevent her from learning to know him better every day; perhaps she will, herself, find out the danger of his illusions, she will see the intellectual gulf which lies between them; and upon this do I build my hopes.

"The pride of her heart, which makes her now hold fast to her love, will soon become the most dangerous enemy to that love.

"Her better feelings will, at last, win the victory; and then

perhaps, with a careful hand, the veil may be lifted from her eyes."

Schröder was, in the beginning, opposed to his sister's views, and combatted them; but he yielded when he found his mother coincided with Dorothea. In this way, the Major would be brought under their eyes; and they could, perhaps, peep a little into his conscience.

With a violent struggle, did Schröder reconcile himself to the thought of receiving this man as a friend of the family, and to giving him a kindly greeting; he knew, however, that this affair had gone too far to hope for anything from open opposition.

It was then resolved to receive the Major kindly; to ignore entirely his probable future relations to the family; but to place no obstacles in the way of the lovers. In the mean time, however, Schröder should inquire carefully as to Sylberg's character and past life; and thus, perhaps, obtain the knowledge of some facts which would give him an excuse for dismissing him forever.

This course was wholly unsuited to the character of the great actor, but the peace and happiness of a beloved sister were at stake.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THOUGH an unwelcome guest, the Major now received a welcome to the Ackermans, and his first visit was more favorable to him than could have been expected.

Frau Ackerman found his person attractive, and his bearing fine and cultivated, and even Dorothea declared that he had made a more agreeable impression upon her than ever before.

Schröder, however, was disposed to reserve his opinion; he was not willing to confess that the calm and modest demeanor of Sylberg would under other circumstances have won his regard.

The Major's conduct, particularly towards him, had been marked by dignity and discretion; and in the course of the conversation over Schröder's stage and its importance for the German theatre generally, he had manifested a true love and knowledge of art.

Schröder was indeed inclined to ascribe Sylberg's love for Charlotte to the impression which such an actress must necessarily make upon so enthusiastic a friend of the stage.

But Schröder was a man of experience, and during his active life had studied many varied and remarkable characters; he could not deny that the Baron possessed rich intellectual capabilities, but he remained true to his resolve to watch this man with suspicion, or with double mistrust, now that he knew him to be intelligent and cultivated.

Sylberg, on his part, was well pleased with this prelude to his new intercourse with the Ackermans, and he had soon no other aim than to establish it upon a firm footing, and play the double role of declared friend of the family and secret lover of the younger daughter, with all the talents at his command.

What could have been more agreeable to his taste than such a love affair? He was privileged to live upon his old independent footing, and yet enjoyed all the charming attractions

which, to a happy bridegroom, shorten the path from earth to heaven. An agreeable house, an agreeable sweetheart, and all this surrounded with a glory which art casts around its worshipped idol.

What could have been more satisfactory to a man of Sylberg's frivolous views of life, his steady perseverance in any object, and his aversion to all natural restraints, than this? No unpleasant considerations, no uncomfortable duties hemmed him in.

It was only necessary to appear before the family as a man of principle and solid character, and nothing stood in the way of his wishes as it regarded Charlotte.

The Major's reflections were about of this character when he returned to his lodgings after his first visit to the Ackermans. He was indeed almost drunk with his happiness. When he took leave, Charlotte accompanied him to the house-door, a gust of wind blew out the light, and Charlotte pressed a burning kiss upon his lips as the seal of this day's happiness; and after a short embrace, sprung lightly up the steps, and left him with the glow of her kiss still warm upon his lips, alone in the cold unfriendly night.

After his return to his hotel this feeling was dissipated by his host handing him a letter from his friend Major T. in Copenhagen, who informed him that his Colonel had willingly granted the furlough he had asked.

In relation to Sylberg's love affair with Charlotte the letter was concise; contained but common places, such as merry and frivolous young men of that day, as of the present time, are in the habit of uttering when such adventures are in question.

In conclusion, however, he warned Sylberg that an attachment to so distinguished an actress might cost him dear. He reminded him of the scandal whispered throughout the Copenhagen saloons with regard to himself and the Countess Lindenkron, and advised him not to risk his neck and his renown by reaching after grapes which hung beyond his reach.

At first Sylberg laughed heartily over his friend's anxieties.

He saw no reason for fearing the evil star which had lowered over his love for Ulrika.

On this occasion everything was according to his wish, indeed, his success had been beyond his wishes. Charlotte was his; the family were in no respect so stern as he had feared; without much hesitation they had opened their doors to him and given him entrance to his beloved. What remained for him to wish? Only the king's consent to his marriage; then he might formally demand Charlotte's hand of her mother, lead his bride to the altar, and then bear her in triumph as his wife to Copenhagen.

Strange! What was it, then, which, in spite of all these rich fancies and romantic charms, brought to his heart a certain dissatisfaction if not an absolute weight of care—a something to which he could give no name.

Was it the general insufficiency of even this great and unexpected good fortune? Was it discontentment with himself or with present relations? Or had his treasures been too lightly won to be properly valued?

Sylberg, surrounded by this unaccustomed atmosphere, was like the sailor whose steps are tottering and insecure when upon the firm shore. After long years of wandering he trembled as he approached the peaceful haven.

The strange happiness of the family, the stern morals and kindly customs of their daily life mingling so harmoniously, and to whose authority all who entered the peaceful circle must submit,—all this brought some misgivings to his mind after his first visit to the Ackerman's.

Yes, it must be that, and nothing else! No matter in what extravagant and glowing colors his fancy painted the Eldorado of his love, he was continually reminded of the urgent and inexorable conditions by which his happiness could be secured.

It was the unexpected impression made upon him by this family, and still more, Charlotte's appearance among them, which made him feel insecure. Their household life was so different from anything he had ever supposed, a thoroughly

stern, moral, simple burgher family, bearing the stamp in all its surroundings and customs of the noble, cultivated, and patrician families of Hamburg. There was nothing to be seen of that destructive and genial disorder which generally prevails in the houses of actors ; no frivolous sacrifice of propriety.

That egotism which so often accompanies the renowned actor in private life and betrays the tragic hero of the stage, failed entirely with the Ackermans. The quiet virtues of life bloomed here in their richest development.

The Baron recognised the fact that he could have no such engagement with Charlotte as would cast a shadow upon the reputation of the house.

It was also his cool conviction, that notwithstanding the courtesy with which he had been received, his intercourse with Charlotte was hemmed in by sharp fixed limits, and that Shröder particularly observed the most measured tone in his conduct towards him.

“ But what do I want ? Why can I not be satisfied ! ” said he, springing up, and throwing his friend’s letter scornfully to the floor, believing it to be the cause of his inexplicable mood ; “ I am a fool to allow myself to be influenced by one who knows neither Charlotte or my engagement to her.

“ Has she not said yes ! and do I not love her with every drop of blood in my veins ?

“ Truly, marriage has not heretofore been my affair ! but which of the women who have, from time to time, enchained me can be even distantly compared with my Charlotte ? Not one ! ”

Sylberg soon came to a conclusion, and without longer thought he announced to his friend his engagement to the young actress, told him all the circumstances connected with his present intercourse with the family, and asked him to take the necessary steps to obtain the King’s consent to his marriage as soon as possible.

In conclusion he wrote thus :

“ I trust to the zeal of your friendship for me ! Do not keep

me long waiting, lest the vehement flame in my breast should consume me; or, perhaps, extinguish itself in evident impatience.

‘My grapes do hang high on the stock, but I am a good climber!

“Countess Lindenkron is again here, but lives very retired. Confidentially—I would rather she was at the other end of the world than in Hamburg now!

“I must be upon my guard—she would be quite capable of—— You also must know how to be silent—particularly before our gray-bearded cousin of the regiment.

“Do not speak a word of my theatrical love affair until I give you notice.

“Good-night, brother heart!

“With my beloved and loving Emilia Galotte, I shall forget the painful past.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MAJOR SYLBERG was correctly informed.

The Countess Linden kron had returned to Hamburg and lived a most secluded life ; she had relinquished almost all her former social relations, and her intercourse was limited to those persons whose friendship had real value in her eyes. The early death of her husband had scattered the crowd of so-called friends which had assembled around the gay Count and his charming wife.

We have described Ulrika's terror when she heard of Sylberg's presence in Hamburg. She had believed him to be in Schleswig with his regiment.

The mere proximity of this man seemed to her an omen of evil.

When, however, Frances returned one evening breathless to the house, and declared that the Major had followed her through several streets, the anxiety of the Countess was greatly augmented, and she was convinced that he had some cunning design against her !

A short time after, her worthy uncle and godfather, Colonel Hollbach, arrived unannounced, and declared his intention of living with her in future. He said that the air of the Copenhagen court had given him the influenza.

The truth was that the old swordsman, by his peculiar and capricious manners, had brought himself into conflict with all the influential persons at the court, and in consequence of that had demanded his discharge. This grievance had greatly disconcerted him, and made him bitter against the ungrateful world, whose good times, like most old people, belonged wholly to the past.

This Uncle Anton was an original old owl, with a thin, stiff figure, and a black plaster over his left eye, which he had lost in a fight at sea with a pirate ship. By nature he was good,

and soft-hearted as a child ; but the fatigues and exposures of a soldier's life had made him prejudiced and rugged ; none but those who knew him well, as Ulrika did, could have lived in peace with him ; his character was a mixture of gentleness and austere rudeness, of simplicity and wilfulness ; firm as a rock on all points of honor, nothing could induce him to change his opinion or lead him to give up anything he had resolved upon ; it would have been easier to cut out the ball which he had carried for twenty years between his ribs.

His character was stamped upon his face, so that the first impression made by his appearance was by no means favorable, and those who met him generally turned aside ; his language was as peculiar as the man, and it was very difficult for him to connect three words together properly or to make his meaning clear.

The principal part of what he wished to say, generally remained, between stammering and whispering, sticking in his gray beard, and every sentence he commenced ended in an inarticulate rattle, in which the letter *r* bore a principal part ; then his large, clear gray eye flashed and rolled about so mysteriously in its cavern, as if it would lead to the vanguard the reserved thoughts which his heavy tongue refused to utter !

The only word which he pronounced without stumbling was "gradaus"—out with it straight—and this was almost always on his tongue whether cursing or blessing, whether merry or hungry.

This man, who had been the faithful guardian of her youth, seemed to Ulrika as if sent from heaven to protect her in her lonely and neglected condition. Having found this pillar of strength, her feet were fixed upon a firm foundation and she no longer feared Sylberg.

The Colonel had steadily refused to live with her during the life of her husband, but he now made himself at home, and soon preferred the beautiful city of Hamburg to Copenhagen.

The thin, gray-bearded warrior, with his stiff, soldierly bearing and the plaster over his eye, was a remarkable appearance for

the neighborhood, and he was no sooner seen upon the street than every eye was directed towards him. Indeed, his grave aspect frightened the children into the house.

No one knew this character or his former relations, but throughout the whole neighborhood he was soon called the Captain from Copenhagen.

At this time, after long delay, Shakspeare's first piece, *Othello*, was to be brought upon the stage. The entire educated population of Hamburg, with the exception of a few vigorous advocates of the old style, and some who were opposed to the influence of the stage, took the most lively interest in this experiment. The knowing ones and the dilettanti were, in advance, zealous in their praise of this master work of the new dramatic era, while Schröder's intimate friends declared that this would be the most successful representation of exalted tragedy which their admirable Director had given to the public.

Ulrika was a great friend of the theatre, and as in her little circle nothing else had, of late, been spoken of than the new tragedy, she resolved that Frances and herself should attend the play for the first time, since the death of her husband.

Uncle Anton could not be induced to go, declaring that all operas and comedies were "gradaus," the way to the mad-house.

Schröder had done all to arouse the expectation of the public to the highest degree, and to present the great Shakspeare in a manner worthy of his genius, upon the German stage. New costumes, new scenery, and every other adornment was announced in the journals.

On the morning of the representation not a place was to be had, and in the evening the police was obliged to assemble in large force, so great was the pressure of the crowd at the ticket office.

Since "Rutland," the house had not been so well filled, although Charlotte, who was generally the most powerful attraction, was not to appear in the play. Schröder had given the role of Desdemona to the older sister, whose person and bearing

were exactly suited to this ideal of true womanhood, of whom her father said : " Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion blushed at herself." Brockman gave Othello, and Schröder Iago. And so masterly was his representation of the stony-hearted, refined villain, that you would have thought hell the poorer for a couple of hours by one devil at least.

Ulrika sat with Frances in one of the front loges, and watched the play with constantly increasing interest. She shuddered at the appearance of Iago. Her greatly excited imagination and the wondrous power of the actor brought before her mind the base man who had tried to play the same role in her own family circle.

Schröder played the part of Iago without exaggeration, and only from time to time did he allow the devil embodied in Iago to appear, that terrible instrument by which fate destroyed the most glorious earthly happiness. The spectators looked on with abhorrence at this representation of degenerate human nature. The wise actor knew how to unveil it slowly before their eyes, and not to surpass the bounds of poetic truth.

Never had such breathless attention and suspense, such feverish excitement, reigned in this room as on the evening when the Moor of Venice was given !

One of Schröder's cotemporaries gave this account of the representation of Othello :

" But this Iago, this Othello, this Desdemona, these horrid volcanic eruptions of jealousy, malicious joy, and thirst for blood, were too terrible, too agitating, for the greatest part of the spectators, particularly the women. During the most tragic scenes, one after the other fainted away. The doors of the loges were rapidly opened and shut, many left the theatre, and many were carried out."

During that scene in which the cunning Iago instils the poison of jealousy against Desdemona into the soul of Othello, Ulrika felt the horror of that terrible day return upon her, in which Sylberg had sought to fill her husband's heart with suspicions against her.

Almost insensible, it seemed to her, that the scene around

her was no illusion ; that this was the same Iago, with the same hellish arts, striving to delude the Count ; and this serpent in human form, was hissing not against Desdemona's honor, but her own. When, suddenly, just as the unhappy Othello had been fully convinced by the fatal handkerchief of Desdemona's guilt, a low cry of horror escaped from Ulrika's lips, who turned deadly pale, and with a trembling voice she whispered to her companion :

“ Look in yonder loge, Frances ; there sits another Iago gazing, with a knowing glance, at that successful image of himself upon the stage. Yes, it is he ! Iago applauds Iago ; and that young lady in the next loge with whom he is speaking so earnestly ! Oh ! could I but warn that beautiful and innocent girl to be upon her guard ! ”

Frances soon discovered the object of Ulrika's alarm. He was sitting in a loge exactly opposite to them, in deep shadow ; and while all around had only eye and ear for the stage, he was secretly, and it seemed confidentially, whispering to a young girl in the next loge, who was apparently giving him the most flattering attention.

Ulrika saw her blush several times ; then, with an expressive glance at his beautiful companion, he left the loge. She bowed her head, and a few moments after she also left the theatre.

From this time there was for the Countess no Othello, no Iago, no Desdemona ; she saw nothing that passed upon the stage ; her thoughts followed this young maiden ; even the horror of Sylberg's presence was not so painful to her, as the presentiment, that, in the beautiful unknown, she saw a new sacrifice to Sylberg's treachery. They had disappeared together from the theatre, and neither had returned. Ulrika had seen enough of the girl to know that she was of good family and fine education, and she shuddered when she thought of the poor innocent in the society of this base villain.

The play closed, amidst the breathless silence of the public, and so great was the impression made upon the spectators by the last terrible scene, that when the curtain fell no sound of

applause was heard throughout the house; a heavy weight seemed to be lifted from all hearts, and they longed for the open air.

Schröder announced Othello again, for the following evening, but the house was not full.

Even the extravagant admirers of Shakspeare were of the opinion, that the nerves and imaginations of the Hamburg public had been too much wrought upon, and they would have been much better pleased if Heaven's vengeance had reached the abhorred Iago alone.

Some weeks later, Schröder announced the third representation, but the city council made this condition with him, that the most tragic scenes, and, above all, the bloody conclusion of the play, must be set aside.

Thanks to this wise consideration of the city fathers, the passionate Othello, in spite of his hot African blood, was in the third representation made to see that there was a marked difference between the half-heathenish island of Cyprus and the good Lutheran city of Hamburg, and that a pure innocent woman could not be murdered, out of vile jealousy, right under the eyes of the most noble senators—not even with a theatre dagger!

Out of consideration, then, for the public weal, Desdemona was allowed to live.

A most touching reconciliation scene solemnized the triumph of true love over malice and slander.

Iago alone received the punishment for his treachery; he was put to death without mercy. Othello and Desdemona returned, a happy wedded pair, to Venice.

Senior Götze, the chief of the orthodox pastors, was not, however, satisfied with "The Modified Othello," as it was now called. He engaged in an active contest against the comedians. An angry strife arose. The journals of the day defended the stage with much warmth; declared its influence to be for good, both upon the moral and intellectual character of the people. Herr Götze was driven to the wall, and declared that he would lay aside his seniorat.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SINCE the entrance of Major Sylberg into the Ackerman circle, and their silent acquiescence to his relations with Charlotte, all their former pleasant social intercourse was banished. No one seemed right contented. The influence of a third person was felt in the general spirit of the house. His peculiar relations to the family demanded the most marked discretion on their part, not only to himself, but to the outside world.

Schröder had yielded to his mother in this, that there should be no question of a positive engagement between the Baron and his sister, even in the family, until it could be avowed in the face of the whole world. In some points of view this seemed to be a discreet decision; but, all things considered, it was anything but wise. On one hand, that was allowed in secret which never would have been allowed openly; on the other hand, they feigned not to see that which was openly manifest. That appearance which they had so anxiously gone out of the way to avoid was, by the arrangements they had consented to, brought to light; and soon they were not only compelled to disavow the engagement, but many other things in relation to themselves which public opinion pronounced judgment upon.

It could not fail that the reception of the Danish officer amongst the friends of the house, and his daily presence there, must give occasion to constructions which came nearer the truth than their originators believed.

The family had enjoyed a blameless reputation; they were of severe morality; their circle was most select, consisting of renowned and educated persons. Who could, then, have believed that a recruiting officer, whose rank and calling had so little in unison with this celebrated artist family, could after a few weeks' acquaintance obtain greater rights and privileges than those friends who had been intimate for years, and who

had intellect, education, and established character? Sylberg, on the contrary, had no other recommendation than a stately figure, adroit manners, and a superficial knowledge of belles lettres.

To Schröder's indignation, he was soon forced to see that several faithful friends of many years' standing, were disconcerted and embarrassed by Sylberg's strange appearance in their confidential circle; the former kindly and inoffensive tone of conversation was lost entirely. Schröder overheard expressions of curiosity and surprise as to who this Herr Sylberg could be, and to what powerful recommendations he was indebted for such marked attentions.

In short, Schröder soon saw, that he had done wrong to agree to an intercourse, which in its vague and indeterminate form must give rise to suspicions and distrust.

If his nearest friends were inclined to think evil of Sylberg's constant visits, what must be the opinion of his wicked and envious enemies; who, finding they could not attack his position as an actor, would be the more rejoiced to cast a stain upon his private life.

Tortured by these cares, and pressed down by the weight of his business as Director, Schröder lost his former courage and gaiety of heart; he was often now ill-tempered and exasperated with those around him; he felt that his peevishness must augment, day by day, as long as this undetermined intercourse existed between his sister and Sylberg.

The Major came daily to the house; and his whole conduct betrayed only too clearly, that he was conscious of the advantages which the pliant indulgence of the family procured for him. Without drawing near to Charlotte too ostensibly, he had opportunities, almost every hour, to speak to her undisturbed, and to obtain more complete possession of her heart.

Schröder suddenly conceived the suspicion, that not content with this untrammelled intercourse in the family, the Major had interviews with his sister elsewhere. The theatre and Charlotte's

frequent absences for hours at a time, offered him the best opportunities for this.

It did not escape the brother's sharp eye, that Charlotte was in a constant state of excitement, which exhausted her strength and drove her from one extreme of feeling to another; she changed color suddenly, and shuddered at the slightest cause; when alone, he often heard her speaking to herself; she was timid and reserved in her bearing to the family; seemed to be ill at ease, and as if she felt herself watched by spying eyes; she neglected her art more and more, and was as absent-minded on the stage as during the rehearsals; there were some roles, in which she seemed formerly to delight, that she now absolutely refused to play.

Schröder was brought by all these observations into the most painful state of indecision and helplessness; his investigations into the past life of Major Sylberg had not been without results which confirmed his unfavorable opinion of the man.

His boundless love for Charlotte, in whom he saw the principal embellishment of his own and his family's artistic fame, left him no longer any peace of mind; and the self-reproach that he had himself instigated the present unhappy state of affairs, filled him with anguish.

He at last resolved to open his heart to his truest friend, and take counsel with him as to the ways and means of changing the present aspect of things.

Unzer had not been at Ackerman's for several weeks; Schröder had not observed this until his distress led him to think of his friend.

A few evenings afterward he determined to seek him at home. He arrived at the lonely country house about twilight. There was no light to be seen; the outer garden gate was closed, and no one came to open it, though he knocked repeatedly. The icy coldness of the night, and a shower of snow, which soon commenced falling, exhausted his patience; and he sprang over the garden wall. A deep silence reigned around the house, the wind whispered through the fir trees and waved the branches of

the old oaks. The door of the outer terrace was closed; Schröder went around the house to the dining room, which was in the basement story; and here, through the shutters, he discovered a faint light; he also believed that he heard his friend's voice; he opened the shutters and peered into the room; at first, he scarcely knew whether what he saw was reality or a vision of his fancy, so little was he prepared for the scene before him.

In the middle of the saloon, on a table covered with white linen, stood a little open coffin, in which amongst fresh and odorous flowers lay the graceful form of a dead child. It was illuminated by the light of many wax candles, which stood around the coffin. The sweet scene was not calculated to remind you of death, but rather of some gay Christmas fête. The child in the coffin seemed to slumber, soothed perhaps by the wondrous fairy tales which the sweet flowers were whispering in its ear.

In spite of the cold February night, the fairy scene touched Schröder like the mild breath of Spring. His emotion and surprise were at first so great that he did not remark his friend, who, lost in thought, one moment gazed at the child, and then with a light hand arranged the flowers carefully, as if afraid of awaking the sleeper.

But Schröder shrank back violently when he first looked on Unzer's countenance. He was paler than the dead child in the coffin, and his sad features were more in unison with death than the gay flowers and the festal illumination, which seemed to the observer like a lovely winter tale, more attractive in its mystery than it could be in its development.

Not a little curious to have an explanation of this strange solemnity, reminding him of the ostentatious obsequies of southern lands, Schröder passed through the back door into the house, and was met by the Doctor's housekeeper, who exclaimed—

“God be thanked that you are here, Herr Schröder. I trust you may succeed in comforting the Herr Doctor in his boundless sorrow, and putting an end to this sad history. Since yes-

terday evening, he sits by the body of his little foundling, will see and speak to no one, and is wholly comfortless. Ah, Herr Schroder, persuade him to take a little rest and not to destroy himself utterly. It was only a strange child, whose parents nobody knew, and the good God has taken it to himself in mercy, because it could never have been happy in this world."

At this moment Unser opened the door, recognised his friend, was somewhat embarrassed, recovered himself quickly, and said—

"Do not talk with old Margaret, Fritz. Come and convince yourself in what a lovely form death has entered into this house. I will then explain all to you, and in the name of God close the little coffin, which we will bury early in the morning, at St. Michel's Church."

Schröder followed his friend into the room. Unser led him to the coffin, and pointing to the child, he said, with a painful smile—

"Guess now, Fritz, why I expend so much sorrow on this little being, why I myself surround it in death with life's beautiful and kindly symbols; but you would never divine, even when I tell you, that this child has borne off with it into the silent grave all that was left of love and hope in my heart, as the last sweet flower dies with the beautiful spring."

"In God's name, Karl, what does this mean?" said Schröder, deeply moved. "Why do you surround death, which is itself the dark, unfathomable mystery of our lives, with so much obscurity?"

"Death is no mystery, no enigma," replied Unser, and his glance betrayed an infinite sorrow. "Life alone is the terrible sphinx which, by its riddles, drives us into the arms of death. Here, in the human breast, rests the dark secret of existence; here Providence unites the inscrutable hieroglyphics of fate, and he who could and would decipher them must lose his reason in order not to go astray as to all that is exalted, beautiful and holy; yes, lose faith in God and his omnipotence. That child," here he seized his friend's arm convulsively, "that child

expired like a match just lighted when taken into a dark, moist atmosphere, so its young life went out. Well, there is nothing strange in that!

"But there is another death, which better deserves the name; that death in which a pure and glorious life, full of virtue, beauty and soul-enthusiasm, suddenly, and as if blinded by its own lustre, disappears in night a prey of hostile powers and destructive influences; that is death, Fritz, when genius leaves its own sunny path, and wanders off in the dark and evil ways of the world; believing also that it is following a more exalted spirit, when it is pursuing the phantom of its own illusions."

"But what relation has all this with *that*?" said Schröder, pointing to the child.

"You are right," replied Unzer; "it is a sin against that little being to interweave my misery with its death, and yet it is not possible for me to think of my own loss apart from the death of this child. It bore the name ———, is, as I have said, the last rose of my spring."

Schröder could find no meaning in the words of his friend, whom he had never before seen in so excited and passionate a condition. But what was his astonishment, his painful emotion, when Unzer explained to him this strange scene, and his grief at the death of the child! It was the child from Kugelsort, whose strange disappearance was now accounted for.

This was the solution of his friend's strange conduct, and of that heartfelt grief which was more painful than the death of the child.

The scales fell from his eyes! Had he not called the child by the name of his sister—called it Charlotte—called it the last rose of his spring?

One moment Schröder hesitated to give words to what he had read in Unzer's soul. Soon, however, his grief mastered him, and he exclaimed—

"For this reason then, poor friend, you have for some time past avoided my house; therefore is the death of this child interwoven with your own grief. Karl, dear Karl, I entreat you, by

our friendship, speak out clearly, what connection has that child with yourself and Charlotte?"

"Madam Fanny at Kugelsort can, perhaps, explain that by her cards better than I can," said Unzer, in a hollow voice, but without turning away his rigid glance from the little coffin.

"Yes, yes, Madam Fanny must know, for your sister, Fritz; your younger sister goes of late constantly to Kugelsort, but not alone—that would be improper, accompanied by your new house friend, Baron von Sylberg!"

"What do you say, Karl?" said Schröder, springing back, white as death; "Charlotte with Sylberg, in the house of the fortune-teller?"

"Yes, I have for a long time thought things were not right with them both! But how do you know this? Have you seen it yourself, or is there hope that you may be mistaken?"

Unzer shook his head and smiled painfully.

"Can you doubt the agony I suffered in being forced to believe this thing of Charlotte? Can you think that upon a bare suspicion I would have accepted my wretchedness, and destroyed in advance, with my own hand the heaven of my hopes? Then, Fritz, you can have no idea of the breathless anguish of a heart that loves, and with what caution it follows up every trace of its misfortune, how it struggles against the vulture claws of doubt and jealousy, and rather allows itself to be rent asunder than to be assured of its fate.

"Yes, yes, dear friend, it is as I tell you. This Sylberg, not content with my mother's weakness in allowing him an interview with Charlotte, not content with all the privileges that Frau Ackerman and yourself accorded him, such as are only granted to a declared bridegroom, slips secretly, whilst you are at the theatre playing Iago, with your sister into that degraded locality!"

"Stop, Unzer!" cried Schröder, sinking back upon the sofa and clasping his hands before his eyes.

"I must explain clearly to you what relation all this has to Charlotte and myself," Unzer replied, softly drawing his friend's

hands from his face and looking with tender sympathy into his eyes :

“ You know why I surrounded the little coffin with so much pomp. In the death of that child I have wept the death of my love.

“ To-morrow, after the funeral, I intended to visit you and disclose all ! This was my firm resolve, and it is even better that you should be informed to-day ! ”

He took his friend's arm and led him into the adjoining room, where Schröder in some degree recovered his composure and agreed with Unzer that a calm and discreet action in this affair was indispensable if they did not wish to forfeit the advantage they had gained over the Baron, and bring an open scandal upon the reputation and honor of the family.

They agreed that Schröder should unmask Sylberg on the first opportunity, accuse him boldly of his dishonorable conduct, and break off all further connection with him.

“ He may believe in me,” cried Schröder, passionately. He tried to master himself, but the feeling of injured honor, his anguish on Charlotte's account, scattered to the winds his hardly won composure. “ I have taught more than one distinguished scoundrel manners and decency by this fist, and I swear to you, Karl, he shall never again cross my threshold, if I have to fling him from the house in open day—this brave officer of his Danish Majesty, decorated with orders ! ”

“ For God's sake, friend, no passionate haste ! ” said the Doctor. “ You would thus bring about what our most zealous care should seek to prevent—that this story should become notorious, and Charlotte's name be brought in connection with that of this base man.

“ The only way to obviate this is, that you should whisper your opinion and resolve as carefully as possible in the Major's ear, accompanying it with such significant insinuations that he cannot possibly misunderstand you. Men of Sylberg's character never feel it a moral duty to defend their honor when they

know themselves exposed, and this man will be careful not to venture again in your sight."

In cool blood, Schroder was compelled to confess this counsel good, and his friend succeeded in extracting from him a promise that Charlotte should not know he had discovered her great fault; he said, among other things:

"Her most profound repentance when she first comes to the knowledge of her unpardonable levity, will be that she is so much more guilty than any man in the world could believe possible.

"Let us remember, Schröder, that her sentimental character, and her easily excited imagination, has had much to do with this first error of her life.

"These are distinctive attributes, without which she would never have been the great dramatic artist we wonder at and admire.

"No other art is so well calculated to awaken wishes and feelings, in a youthful heart, which though they spring from a vague longing, lead the soul astray.

"In this experience, of every variety of feeling, passion and fate, which is a necessity with an actor, lies the ground of their ideal mode of thought, and also the impracticable views of life so generally found in men of your profession. You are forced to lay aside or disguise your own individuality, to enter heart and soul into strange circumstances and the passions they bring forth, in order to become great and true in art.

"The poetic illusions of actors do not injure them when they are also occupied with the demands, considerations and limitations of every-day life. But this is not the case with those who see only around them the laws of art, which are often strange and incomprehensible.

"I look upon this as the most remarkable feature of your art, and I am convinced that Charlotte's love for this man is more the product of her imagination than true heartfelt affection."

Schröder replied, with some bitterness:

"Oh, yes! you may be right, friend; many things may appear in order in the eyes of us comedians which are highly

immoral and objectionable in the eyes of ordinary men engaged in the common business of life. What significance has it, if an actor or an actress should tread morals or decency under foot?

"Liberal art allows him many privileges, and he is mostly excluded from so-called good society!

"In spite of this, however, I would like to know what true artist would so sin against himself as to call that which is hideous, beautiful; that which is common, exalted; and take interest in that which is low and debased. Can a truly educated spirit feel itself at home and at ease, in a disorderly life? Can genius, or talent, take delight in the coarse and the frivolous? You say truly, that an actor must constantly set aside his own individuality; but they are not always common and debased characters which we represent. Most generally they are models of the purest virtues and the most exalted morals which we illustrate before the eyes of you honest people!

"And must not constant intercourse with sublime poetry elevate the actor, before he can hope to excite the enthusiasm of the public?

"I say to you that the laws of art condemn the degraded character of a Sylberg, and the sickly sentimentality of a Charlotte, as severely as the world at large would do.

"Neither a Rutland, nor an Emilia, nor a Juliet, would forget herself so far as to grant a common adventurer a rendezvous in the house of a fortune-teller! A step so false is as far removed from art, as the practice of your profession is from poison. Poison may, in truth, be made beneficial under your adroit hand, as that which is exceptionable and base may be made a lesson in life by the power of dramatic art."

They continued this conversation till midnight, when their vehement excitement had in some degree subsided. They had been friends for many years, and were enabled to comfort each other, now that unexpectedly the same terrible fate seemed to menace them both.

Unzer gave his friend the history of his life from its first dawning to that fatal hour when he saw his beloved enter the

house of the fortune-teller with Sylberg. He was frank enough to tell him of his mother's wish in regard to Dorothea, and to draw a parallel between the sisters.

From all this, Schröder saw how completely his friend had been dazzled by Charlotte's intellect and genius, and had imagined that he saw in her those qualities and virtues by which Dorothea was distinguished. With Charlotte, on the contrary, they were only the reflection of her sister's soul.

The friends remained together the rest of the night. The morning dawned under a heavy snow-storm; but they found that a large part of the care which had weighed down their hearts the evening before, had vanished away with the shadows of the night, and with new strength and courage they met the trying circumstances which surrounded them.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE new relation which now existed between Charlotte and Sylberg, without any outspoken intention on his part, and without any clearly defined boundaries or conditions on the part of the family, allowed him free entrance to the house, and was well calculated to increase the intense opposition out of which this love had been mostly developed in their hearts. Charlotte had the satisfaction of knowing that her family must yield to the independence and decision with which she had declared herself Sylberg's bride. But she now experienced that the result was of but little consequence to her happiness.

It is true that the wall of separation which divided her from her lover had fallen. The Baron came and went at pleasure, and was constantly received with civility by mother, brother, and sister; but with all this, how little was attained to a heart like Charlotte's? that which remained to be achieved overshadowed completely that which she had arrived at.

The constraint which the severe morals and manners of the family imposed upon her, and the presence of those who knew of her peculiar relations with Sylberg, became more and more oppressive as he who suffered in common with her from these causes showed less patience and submission.

It was not difficult for him to convince her that a great amount of resignation was necessary to enable him to bear coolly the distrust of her brother, and she could not but be grateful to him for this. Her mother disputed with her, her sister quarrelled with her, sometimes in this respect, sometimes in that; they found her too kindly, too open-hearted with Sylberg. Sometimes in his presence family matters were discussed which were wholly unsuited to a stranger's ear.

Schroder's constant complaint was that she neglected her

art; her mother remarked upon her disorderly wardrobe, and absent-minded, despondent bearing.

While Dorothea trembled for her own and her sister's reputation, she had no other thought than the fear that Charlotte would, by her conduct to Sylberg, excite suspicion.

This constant censure and fault-finding on the part of her family, was in reality occasioned by their discontent with themselves and their repentance at having voluntarily agreed to Sylberg's visits.

The result of it all was that often Charlotte herself scarcely knew how to look upon her engagement with the Baron.

It is true that her mother and sister strove in his presence to seem natural and kindly, but he had no sooner left the house than the scene changed, and even as quickly the tone of feeling. Bitterness seemed generally only to prevail against Charlotte. That dear love, which had yielded to her intercourse with Sylberg, now passed over the narrow boundary of that permission, and manifested itself only in blame, suspicion, and anxiety for her.

To this discord and tension in her home circle, was now added an influence which at first no one suspected, which gave a new direction to her inborn thirst for freedom and independence of feeling, and separated her still more widely from her former life.

This influence was exercised by Sylberg. He was no sooner acquainted with the characters and habits of the Ackermans, than he realized fully that there was but little hope for him in this circle.

The family made all nearer approach between him and Charlotte absolutely impossible.

He felt more clearly from day to day that Schröder stood yet more in his way than the mother or Dorothea. All were outwardly civil to him, but Schröder's uniformly cold, ceremonious manner towards him inspired him with the fear that to play a double role before so great an actor was difficult, and he could scarcely hope to deceive him.

But even this conduct of Schröder was favorable to Sylberg's plans. Soon, not only love, but the exasperating pressure of home restraints, inspired Charlotte with the thought of seeking in some other place that freedom of intercourse with her lover which was denied her at home.

Charlotte saw the victory over himself which this cold reception cost him. She saw with what self-denial he bore the proud coldness of her brother, the suspicious watchfulness of mother and sister. From time to time he gave her an intimation, allowed her to glance into his heart and realize what he suffered on her account, what dark anticipations tortured him. Perhaps Charlotte, under the influence of her family, would give him up, if the King's consent should be much longer delayed. Why should she, who had been so ready, with joyful heroism, to offer up all for her love, put such restraint upon her heart in presence of so faithful and worthy a lover?

She consented then that he should accompany her home from the theatre, and when not upon the stage, she left her loge early to walk and chat with him in some corner of the large building, or when the weather allowed, covered with a thick veil, she took his arm and wandered with him through the streets. These secret meetings, although attended with some danger, had for both lovers far more of attraction and interest than their limited and restrained intercourse at home. They could, undisturbed, make known to each other all the passionate emotions of their hearts, and confess without timidity their love and their happiness; and besides, after such interviews, they could bear home the consciousness of having deceived the envious world and enjoyed a few moments of blessed intercourse.

Stronger, firmer, day by day, grew the magical chain which bound the young artist's soul to this man whom all her family regarded with distrust.

The more free, the more unconstrained, his conduct was to her, the more fully she recognised qualities which made him worthy of consideration and worthy of her love.

His passionate enthusiasm, his tender impetuosity, awakened

in Charlotte's bosom sweet and unknown emotions; and a certain sudden and inexplicable reserve in the midst of a fiery effusion of feeling gave her a deeper insight into this manly soul, so wondrously composed of strength and tenderness, of courage and gentleness. She was often shocked at the truth with which he painted the feelings of his innermost heart; it seemed to her that she had experienced them with him. His judgment upon men and things showed keen and pre-eminent ability. His conduct to her was natural, tender, and ever considerate, and every chord which she touched in his heart found a pure echo in her own.

Sylberg told her many interesting episodes in his past life; even the errors of his youth were not concealed from her. It seemed to be a sort of satisfaction to him to hold the crimes of his youth responsible for his early misfortunes.

He charged himself with the most unpardonable folly and levity, the most vehement passions, the most wanton extravagance.

He confessed that even in boyhood he had felt the most unconquerable stubbornness, the most unbridled passions; and later, when he attained youth and manhood, he had to thank the exalted and ideal direction of his intellect for leading him away from the paths of sin and folly. But over only one fatal and momentous period of his past life did he preserve the same dark mystery with which he had clothed it at the ball and the evening of the sleigh-ride.

More than once he seemed to be on the point of explaining this event more fully, but the terrible remembrance alone affected him so violently that he could only utter half-broken sentences.

Charlotte surmised only this much, that he had been constrained by a chain of circumstances to sacrifice his love to his friendship; that this offering had been the source of the most terrible sufferings for him; that he had passed many years in the most agonized self-accusation, holding himself guilty until the dying hour of his friend had restored to him his faith in

himself and his belief in a just God. On various occasions he produced the strong impression on Charlotte that no other man had ever innocently suffered so much; that he had sacrificed the truest friendship to treacherous love.

Nothing could have induced Charlotte to press further for his confidence. Was not each one of his words the expression of a feeling which in its mysterious relations to his fate testified to his noble heart and his proud consciousness of right. Certainly he had been at that time only stern and unjust to himself. Had she not on many occasions where there was question of justice and honor learned to know his conscientiousness and his sensitive nature?

This man, she thought, might have concealed from her his whole past life, and the slightest doubt of his truth and honor never entered her soul. Faith in him was so strong in her heart that there was nothing she would not have dared for him, for one glance of his beautiful quiet eyes. How could a heart of such warmth and illumination see anything else than a pure soul in the man to whom it was consecrated?

One evening, as she was wandering during the play with her arm in his through the streets, they had reached the neighborhood of Kugelsort, without Charlotte remarking it, and the Major proposed to her to visit the Portuguese Fanny, and have their fortunes told. Before Charlotte knew whether he was in jest or earnest, he said gayly, "That which you dared to do once alone, you can now do more securely in my society; your veil is thick enough to conceal you from a hundred eyes, and besides I will declare you are my countrywoman."

"I have a horror of this house," said Charlotte, anxiously; "as a magnet for love's sake I could take such a step once, but wilfully, wantonly! No, Max, let us not go. Kugelsort, as you know, has already done me evil, and yet, truly, it was not heathenish fortune-telling, but true Christian love which brought me into bad repute at that time."

"Go once more, for love for me," said the Major, caressingly. "I have heard so much of this woman's art, that I am really

anxious to ask her something of my future. Now that you are mine," added he, tenderly, "I dare ask questions of fate."

Without giving her time to make any new objections, he walked forward towards the house; he rattled his sword, which he carried under his mantle, upon the deal-boards, and the same old man whom Charlotte had seen, appeared to light the steps. But this time they were not received by Madam Fanny. A woman neatly clad, with soft, pale features, motioned them to enter. It was not, however, the same room in which Charlotte had first found the Portuguese. The woman told them that Madame Fanny had gone out, but would return in a few moments.

"We will wait till she comes," said Max, throwing off his mantle, and drawing a comfortable chair towards the fire for Charlotte, he then said to her in English, "Is it not more comfortable here than without, in the cold snowy night air?"

The woman left the room, remarking, that she would seek Madam Fanny in the neighborhood.

Charlotte, who now saw herself left suddenly in a strange old gloomy house alone with her lover, could not suppress a feeling of anxiety; she remembered that the Portuguese had once offered her the use of her house for a meeting with her lover, and that Sylberg had on one occasion made the same proposition. She looked him searchingly in the eye, and answered—

"No, no, Max, truly I do not find it agreeable here; take your mantle, and let us go at once."

"Why are you in such haste?" said Sylberg, with surprise. "Is this the courage of my little tragic heroine, who in so many knightly plays and awful tragedies, walks fearlessly down in the darkest castle vaults and keeps, and wanders in desolate cloister halls, and dwells in robbers' dens?"

"Do not be foolish, Charlotte; look around now, and tell me what you find here disagreeable or suspicious?"

The room was indeed, in spite of its plain furniture, neat and comfortable; and, in any other house, than that of the fortune-teller, would not have been displeasing.

Thick white curtains shaded the windows; a rose bush in full bloom stood upon the table; the walls were adorned with copper-plate engravings, portraits of distinguished living and dead Hamburgers, amongst them, the portrait of Pastor Götze; a little bookshelf held some innocent romances, and some moral and religious works, not exactly suited to the literary taste of a fortune-teller.

Charlotte noted all these things, more from embarrassment than curiosity; she became, however, good-humored and unembarrassed; and Sylberg's fond attentions soon made her forget that she was in a strange house. He was all devotion and tenderness; and painted in glowing colors, the happiness they would enjoy when they would be constantly together; even as now in these few fleeting moments, and could live for love alone. "Then! yes, then!" cried he, pressing a kiss upon her lips, "you will be my best fortune-teller; you will be mine, and that will be my best prophecy for the future."

Lost in quiet rapture, Charlotte listened to his words. The peace, the security which surrounded her, the feeling of liberty in the presence of her lover, all was so new to her, that she now first fully recognised the constraint that weighed upon her love.

How very different did this love, yes, even her lover himself, appear to her now that he dared for the first time approach her free and unembarrassed! Here he was not obliged to disguise his frank and open manner in the stiff forms of etiquette.

The fire of his glance—the tenderness of his caresses—how happy did his love make him! His whole being seemed electrified.

"If we only had the very worthy Pastor at hand," said he, pointing to the Senior Götze on the wall; "what think you, love, might we not be married at once? witnesses in effigy would not fail us; there hangs Hieronymus Snitger, here Herr Conrad Jastram. Notwithstanding their treachery to the Fatherland, they have still credit enough in Hamburg, to do us this Christian service"

"You godless man! are those your saints?" said Charlotte,

and she was about to scold him for his levity, when the woman who had received them then returned, and announced that she could not find Madam Fanny.

"So then, we will come again," said Sylberg, giving the woman a piece of gold and withdrawing with Charlotte.

We have seen that this meeting at Kugelsort was not the last; Charlotte, who had no idea of the impropriety she was committing, went now without hesitation, almost every evening, with her lover to Kugelsort.

Unzer's discovery of this, on the evening in which Othello was given, robbed the lovers of this asylum, but justified all Schröder's fears and suspicions; he must indeed, be a base man and utterly without conscience, who could induce his promised bride to take such a step.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE day following the eventful night in Unzer's dwelling, several acquaintances of the Ackerman family were invited to tea. Artists, literati, and special patrons of the theatre, who were often united in a merry circle in the house of some friend.

Schröder was obliged to put a strict guard over himself, in order to meet Sylberg with his accustomed calm manner. After the Major's general greeting to the company, he turned to Charlotte, whose bearing was so natural, so unembarrassed, that it would have deceived the sharpest eye of suspicion.

Schröder was so enraged by this deceitful, coquettish acting of his sister towards her guilty lover that he was compelled to leave the room in order to recover himself.

The thought of what he had resolved to do, and which he knew to be the most difficult role he had ever played, encouraged him, and he returned with a cheerful countenance to the parlor to play the hospitable and genial host. He teased Eckhof about his uncombed and tangled wig, and asked him if he would play Tellheim in that frightful affair the next evening?

"Yes, if it was necessary, in my nightcap," said the good-humored artist; and added, humorously, "That must be a fine tragedy which could be so easily destroyed. In former times, when my weekly payment with the Schonemann's troupe was one thaler and sixteen groschens, with which I had to purchase a large part of my wardrobe, I played Orosman, in Voltaire's *Zaire*, in flowered brocade, which I took secretly, by the help of his wife, from the wardrobe of the dead Senator Maurer.

"I tell you, dear children, clothes make men and women, but they do not make actors!"

"Try it once, Eckhof," said Frau Ackerman, who was touched on a tender point by this allusion to theatrical toilette. "Not every man is a Garrick!"

"Once, in a distinguished social circle, he took a footstool

and let it fall from the window, and then played the part of a despairing father, who had killed his child. Dukes and duchesses shed torrents of tears, so touching was the scene. You, however, Eckhof, are no Garrick!"

"The devil! with your Christian permission, Madam Lilienhand," said the actor, half bitterly, half comically. "Not Garrick, indeed! I thank God I am not the heartless niggard, but only poor Eckhof, upon whose gravestone, if he shall ever have one, may perhaps be written, 'The tears he extorted will here flow voluntarily!' As to what relates to the footstool—let us see!"

"Well, do not be cross," said Frau Ackerman, patting him on the cheek. "You know, Eckhof, I tease you about Garrick because it is the fashion of this world to compare giants with giants, and not with dwarfs. In spite of him, and him," pointing to her son and Brockmann, "you are the best of all, and every man in the kingdom might learn to play comedy from you!"

"Lessing himself declared that you could play any rôle, from the smallest to the greatest, and the philosopher Engel asserted that you played Odoardo, that devil's imp, so admirably that all his cool blood was in tumult."

"Don't tell me of the philosopher," said Eckhof, though visibly flattered with the praises of his friend and principal, "you should have seen Engel's countenance when I introduced myself to him in Leipsic. Greatly disconcerted, he measured me from head to foot, and then cried out in mocking laughter, 'Little man, you would play Odoardo! He was only eight inches taller than yourself, and strong and stately!'"

"I declare to you that, like a true Dutch professor, he disputed with me to my face, as to whether I was myself or another."

"But we are entirely forgetting Tellheim," said an old councilman, who was a great friend of the stage. "I propose that Herr Eckhof should prove to us by a rehearsal, that outward form and costume has but little to do with the success of an actor."

“ If Garrick produced such an astounding effect with a foot-stool, our renowned friend can do a great deal with a night-cap.”

“ Wait, Eckhof, I will costume you,” said Dorothea. She hastened off, and soon returned with her brother’s night-cap and dressing-gown.

Amidst the loud applause of the circle, the actor had to yield up his head to Dorothea and the young ladies, and to put on Schröder’s splendid brocatelle, and the gay little Madam Reïnîke, who, with her husband, had just joined the Ackerman troupe, completed the picture of the worthy Dutch house father by placing the huge spectacles of Bock the author, who was present, upon his nose.

So decorated, Eckhof sat for awhile stock stiff, seemingly in dumb astonishment over this strange metamorphosis which had taken place, in his own chair. The old senator now insisted upon his performing some character in direct opposition to his present costume.

And now the dumb acting of Eckhof, as an old man with trembling head, called forth shouts of laughter. He seemed, at first, not to have heard the speaker, and held down his right ear, as deaf old people are apt to do, and asked the speaker to repeat loudly and distinctly. Suddenly, he arose quickly from his arm-chair and threw his head back proudly. The old, bowed down graybeard grew into a youthful, heroic figure ; his eyes sparkled, his countenance was illuminated, and with that wondrous sonorous voice, as soft as it was powerful, as pathetic as emotional, he declaimed a scene from the tragedy of Codrus. He represented the noble King of Athens who, according to the oracle, must die by the hands of the enemy in order to win the victory for his people.

Before the great actor had spoken ten words night-cap and dressing gown were forgotten. They saw and heard only the Grecian hero, who preferred his country to his life. Upon the stage, and clothed in royal purple, Eckhof could not have given Codrus more perfectly. It was said, when he concluded, that he had surpassed himself. He fell back, however, silently, like an

old frail man, into his arm-chair, and stared dreamily for a long time, before him, then he made a movement, as if some one advanced to him and took a seat beside him. He seemed to seize a hand, and began a dialogue from the *Bashful Wedding*, by Götter, which he had made so celebrated by his masterly representation. With your eyes closed the delusion was so perfect that you could almost swear there were two persons talking together. With what gentleness he pictured marriage; with what touching warmth he described the cold egotism of the soul. At last he became more excited; he painted the happiness of his own marriage, and spoke of her of whom death had deprived him. Suddenly, his voice failed him, his lips trembled, his eyes were swimming in tears; then, as if overmastered by pain, with both hands he seemed to seize his companion's arm, and bending over exclaimed, in heart-rending tones, "Unhappy one, do you not know that pain has also its delights?" then sank back in his chair as if annihilated. The spectators were much affected by his powerful acting; but in a moment he sprang up, pushed the night-cap to the back of his head, and with the magical art of a Proteus, changed his physiognomy into that of a dry, dull, good-natured peasant. A burst of applause greeted him as, at the close of the scene between Jurge and Lise, in which he portrayed one moment the peasant the next his wife. He stepped back, and with an awkward scrape of his foot, threw off his night-cap and dressing-gown, and became the kindly, unpretending actor. From every quarter there were bursts of praise and applause. Frau Ackerman declared herself vanquished.

Herr Kreyenpeter, the gallant master of ceremonies, now appeared and announced supper. They adjourned to the dining-room, where the place of honor, was, by general acclamation, assigned to Eckhof.

During the meal, art and literature were the general subjects of conversation; and *Othello* and its mode of reception by the Hamburg public at last absorbed all other themes.

The interference of the civil authorities in the kingdom of art was highly censured.

"It is bad enough that we are not allowed to bring political subjects upon the stage. A city like Hamburg should be free and untrammelled."

"Well, children, I am convinced that in spite of the interference of the police in the affair of Othello, German art and German literature has reached a crisis; soon the genius of a new epoch in art will be victorious. When Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, and the glorious Falstaff, shall be given to us in the German language, then will the German heart burn, and the German head will produce wonders."

To the amazement of all present, the modest master of ceremonies now turned to his principal, and with the air of a stern aristocrat, asked him if he hoped with such roles as Iago to please any audience but that of the galleries, and if it was not sinning against healthy reason and good taste for a great actor to undertake such caricatures.

Schröder replied that every man had a right to his opinions, and that a character like Iago must be looked at from many points of view.

There was zealous disputing over Iago for some time. At last Doctor Dreyer exclaimed, "We have Iago, or at least his masterly representative, in our midst. Herr Schröder can best tell us if he is more an ideal than a natural scoundrel, more a rascal than a philosopher."

Schröder looked for a moment thoughtfully before him, and said, "Yes, yes, Iago is a most excellent scoundrel; but I think his devilry is a little too gigantic for our stage; the proportions of his character go far beyond the general mass of common intriguers, and yet I cannot doubt that the great author has formed him from nature, truth, and history."

"Believe me, friends, the Iagos in daily life are not so rare as men generally think. I have known more than one Iago in whom circumstances alone failed to develope the same crimes the author has pictured; in whom the noblest qualities of intellect seemed to exist only to make their utter want of all moral feeling and sympathy more glaringly manifest. Iago's most

remarkable characteristic was his power to deceive, not only the noble, simple-minded Othello, but the pure Desdemona, that everlasting ideal of a loving, tender woman.

“Desdemona loved Othello with all the ardor and self-sacrifice of her youthful heart; she had but one sentiment to guide her in life, and that was the conviction of the infinite and endless happiness of her love, and the great and glorious soul of him to whom she had offered up all—her reputation, her family, her happy and dazzling existence—this blissful conviction filled her heart and the whole world of nature, and mankind seemed glorified, purified by his noble life. And is not this often the case in real life? Are not the purest and noblest characters often so absorbed by our ardent passions, so blinded that they do not see the traitor in the shadow of their happiness, gliding stealthily behind them.

“Iago’s most dangerous talent was, that of identifying himself with the noble nature upon whose ruin he was resolved, feigning to be all of good and beautiful which could make him attractive to a great and simple soul.”

“At all events,” said Sylberg, cracking an almond; “the Iago of the poet had a lighter task than the Iago of real life, at least with our present social relations, and present views of morality. One thing is certainly enigmatical; how this same Iago, who, in the first scene, is recognised by all the spectators as an unqualified scoundrel, succeeds in deceiving all the personages of the play as to his own character. He was surrounded by persons of the highest rank and cultivation, not likely to confide unsuspectingly in even the most adroit intriguer or adventurer, but they do not suspect him; tell him all their secrets; consider him their best, most sincere friend; and even Emilia, the wife of the scoundrel, notwithstanding her wit and womanly cunning, helps him in his intrigue against the mistress she loves.”

Schröder looked calmly at the Baron. “I can see nothing in all this contrary to nature,” said he, “and experience has proved to me, that the great poet has drawn both noble and base men, powerfully and truthfully. There is nothing to prevent a man

of Iago's character from playing the same part now as then. Crafty knaves and intriguers find a good terrain in our modern times; of this a most shocking example has just been related to me, by which, through the inconceivable villany of a modern Iago, the happiness and honor of a widely respected family has been seriously threatened. However, I do not know the details, and cannot tell you the story, but I do know," said he, in a strange and rapid voice, as if endeavoring to master some powerful emotion, "I do know that the traitorous scoundrel lost his game, because he tried to play the double role of Othello and Iago at the same time."

The Major was agitated, and in the timid glance which he fixed searchingly upon Schröder, there was something of terror.

He recovered himself, and laughing heartily, he said: "I would like to know that scoundrel! Othello and Iago in one person!!"

Schröder did not seem disturbed by this jesting tone, but immediately changed the subject of conversation. Anecdotes, jests, and witty fancies, took the place of the grave questions they had been disputing.

Soon the clock from St. Michel's tower announced midnight, and the guests prepared to depart. Sylberg seized an unguarded moment to squeeze Charlotte's hand, and extract a promise from her to meet him the next evening at Frau Unzer's. As she turned away quickly to avoid suspicion, she saw her brother's watchful eye fixed sternly upon her. While the other guests were taking leave of the ladies of the house, Schröder advanced to the Major, and held him in conversation on indifferent subjects till all the others had left the room. He then accompanied him to the house-door, where Kreyenpeter stood with a light in hand to do the honors.

"Apropos, Major," said Schröder, seizing his right arm confidentially, "you expressed a wish to know the gentleman who was playing the double role of Othello and Iago.

"Oh, only in jest," said Sylberg, alarmed by the flashing

glance with which Schröder accompanied this remark, and the muscular grasp with which he still held his arms.

"So, so, a jest!" said Schröder, raising himself to his full height, "it would be an easy matter for me to make you acquainted with this modern Iago. You need only call on Madam Fanny of Kugelsort; there this quasi Iago entices an innocent maiden, almost a child, of good and honest family, every evening. The scoundrel has inspired her young heart, God knows by what means, with a mad passion for himself, and sooner or later he hopes to murder her innocence, and destroy for ever the peace and honor of the family.

"You should have seen how the base hypocrite, Iago, concealed himself behind the knightly figure of Othello; how he boasted of heroic deeds and swaggered of exalted virtues, the names of which he scarcely knew. Yes, yes, Herr Major, I swear to you that I feel the strongest desire to take my horse-whip and punish the common scoundrel, Sylberg—I beg your pardon, he is called Iago."

"Let me go! what do you mean?" cried the Baron, who felt his right arm disabled by the powerful grasp of Schröder. But in vain did he seek to release himself. With one movement Schröder lifted him from the floor, and calling out in a tone of the greatest cordiality, "Good-night, dear Major, we will meet again when it pleases you to look in upon us." He threw him like a ball of feathers into the street; then closed the door, and turning to the terrified Kreyenpeter he said with perfect composure—

"Let us go to bed, old friend. As to Shakspeare's Iago, we are agreed in this, that he had more wit in his little finger than a hundred Danish braggarts in their whole bodies."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THIS act of violence of an honest man against a scoundrel brought about a result which, according to Schröder and his friends' opinion, could not have been more prompt and more noiseless.

Major Sylberg had been curtly taught that he was known to be a scoundrel. Schröder shuddered when he thought of the shame and wretchedness which this man had sought to bring upon his family.

The greatness of his suffering over his sister's unexampled error, was only equalled by the contempt he felt for Sylberg. From this moment he became convinced that the Major's intentions towards his sister had never been truly honorable, that his love was hypocrisy, his declaration, as to the necessity of the King's consent, false.

Schröder was acquainted with vice, and its thousand intrigues and temptations, not only through the study of his roles, but his youth had been stormy and full of levity, as his biography teaches us. He knew that in the heart of every man there were two hostile powers, one tempting him to evil, the other to purity, virtue, and an exalted existence. The sad errors of his past life gave place to a severe philosophy, so that in the latter period of his glittering career he was reproached with representing too strongly the vices and weaknesses of men.

The terrible discovery of the night before would under other circumstances have driven a man like Schröder to some deed of madness. He passed the following morning in a kind of dull stupor, and could come to no definite conclusions.

The Doctor visited him, and succeeded in allaying in some degree his feverish excitement. He convinced him that his sister's good name, and that of the family, depended upon his coolness, that any rash haste might call down the judgment of the world irretrievably.

Charlotte, however, had no suspicion of this violent rupture of her scarcely-formed love affair.

The first thing to be done was to separate her from the Baron, and to make any further intercourse with him, out of the house, absolutely impossible.

Schröder knew his sister's character, and knew that this would be no easy task. That warm, sentimental heart, which had perhaps no longer strength to tear itself loose from the traitor, might, by a too violent and inconsiderate shock, be driven still further from the path of rectitude.

Schröder knew now, alas! too late, how unwise he had been to allow such intercourse between Charlotte and Sylberg, out of too great consideration for her excitable temperament and passionate nature. In place of warning her with earnest love, and plainly showing her the danger which threatened her peace and good name, he had yielded wholly to her will.

"This is the unblessed consequence of our family diplomacy," said Schröder. "We shut our eyes intentionally upon our dearest and most holy interests, and pretend not to see the cares and perplexities which leave us no rest day or night, and wisely conclude that we have secured ourselves from evil consequences, through fear of transiently disturbing the peace and comfort of the house. The honor of the whole family is set at stake, and they must afterwards hear from strangers what they would not at first trust to each other within four walls."

Schröder knew that Charlotte could not be influenced by persuasion, and still less by severity.

She had gone too far with Sylberg against her own better nature—had followed him in crooked paths. How could her brother hope she would now give up the Baron? Had she not lately declared to Dorothea, in solemn earnest, that from love to Sylberg she would do all he would ask her, and his will was all that was omnipotent with her?

To yield to such sickly sentimentality, was not to be thought of, he must not only convince her that she had given her love

to an unworthy object, but compel her to give up the Baron wholly.

After mature consideration, Schröder concluded that Madam Fanny would be the best instrument in his hands for effecting this purpose. With her other celebrities, it was said that her conduct was regulated by the old proverb, "Speaking is silver, silence is gold." If he could, however, succeed in winning this person to disclose to him some of the incidents of Sylberg's private life, his purpose would be accomplished.

He had cast the Major out of his house as Iago, and now, if he could unmask him as Othello, he might cast him out of his sister's heart. He dared not drive Charlotte to extremes by severity; she must know the Baron to be faithless, must learn to despise him, must know the depths of the abyss to which this first error of her heart had led her.

Unzer was the commissioned physician of the poor in this quarter of the city, and he promised his assistance with the Portuguese.

"If your gold will not succeed in bribing her," said Unzer, "I have another magical word which will bring her to terms. I am much deceived if the name of Sylberg does not play a prominent part in the *Chronique scandaleuse* of this house."

About twilight the two friends turned their steps towards Kugelsort.

The visit of the two distinguished gentlemen, only one of whom she had ever seen, agitated Madam Fanny considerably, and the gravity of their appearance seemed to her an augury of evil.

Unzer assumed his sternest mien, and asked her if she did not know a certain gentleman of the name of Sylberg, a recruiting officer from Denmark?

Madam Fanny now saw that the question had no special relation to her, and she breathed more freely.

"Who does not know him? God knows I know him so well that I wish heartily he could never again cross my threshold!

But what can a poor woman do ! If I am not civil to these rich and frivolous men, I shall have no bread for my children."

"And the young lady—do you know the name of the young lady who was here with this officer a few evenings since?" said Unzer, hastily.

The fortune-teller hesitated, and looked first at Unzer, then at the silent gentleman, whose stern bearing was most imposing. The Doctor repeated his question, and she said, eagerly, "You, Herr Physician, are well known to be of a noble nature, and you would not forgive me if I were indiscreet enough to name the lady. Herr Sylberg has nothing to lose in character—but this young girl—"

Schröder now interrupted her. "It is necessary, Madam, that you should understand the object of my visit here. I require of you a full account of the intercourse between this young lady and Baron Sylberg, and if necessary, I will call in the police. I am resolved to resort to the sternest measures to unmask this villain. If it shall please you, honestly and sincerely to assist me, I will give you fifty thalers. If not—I am the brother and guardian of this unhappy girl, and this justifies me in the course I am now pursuing."

"Madam," said Unzer, threateningly, "if you do not accept the liberal offer of my friend, the distinguished actor Schröder, you may repent it, even this night, in the public prison."

It was difficult to say which of these offers had the greatest effect upon the Portuguese. The public prison and the theatre were at the opposite poles. One brought visions of hunger, loneliness, and terror; the other, the dazzling world of art and splendor.

Unzer had scarcely concluded his threat, when she turned to the "celebrated Herr Actor," and implored him not to make her wretched.

With regard to Sylberg, she declared he had often importuned her to allow him the use of her house for an interview with Mademoiselle Ackerman; he assured her that this was a serious affair; that he would marry Mademoiselle Ackerman as

soon as the family should withdraw their opposition ; she did not doubt the truth of this, and therefore allowed the lovers to meet at her house. She made no allusion to the fact that Charlotte had first been at her house alone and given her a letter for Sylberg, as she wished to place herself in the best possible light, and to prove that a compassionate, Christian heart alone had influenced her in this matter.

“If this is all so, I have no necessity to call upon the police. I am obliged to you, madam, for your candor, and now answer me in all sincerity. Are you willing to assist me in making all this evil good again ? If I am not mistaken, you said you had known Herr von Sylberg many years ?”

“For years, your grace,” said Madam Fanny, in that tone of devoted zeal with which persons of her class return the civilities of distinguished people ; “and he has almost always managed to bring me into trouble. Oh, if I dared speak fully !”

“What you say to us of Herr Sylberg will under all circumstances remain our secret,” replied Schröder. “It is, alas ! to my interest to conceal the crimes of this man. Besides, I wager a hundred to one, you can tell me nothing worse of him than I already know.”

Madam Fanny now concluded to be indiscrete, led thereto, perhaps, by vanity and greed, united to a bitter anger against Sylberg, who for a long time had not visited her house, and had now returned only to bring her trouble and vexation, as he had done in the case of Bertha ; he had estranged the sailors from her, and was now about to bring her into conflict with the police. She resolved, therefore, to make a clean breast of it.

The Baron had first visited her house in company with the deceased Count Lindenkron ; they were at that time inseparable friends. Madam Fanny was convinced that Sylberg was resolved upon the ruin of the Count. Once, when he was about half drunk, he confided to her that Count Lindenkron had a foreboding of an early death, and had made him the guardian of his fortune, and of his two young sons during their minority. For some weeks after the Count’s death, Sylberg continued visiting

at her house, and was drinking harder, and more generally dissipated than ever before; a change had come over him. In the midst of his wildest orgies he was gloomy and abstracted, as if tortured by some hidden enemy; she heard nothing more of his guardianship of the Count's children, but Sylberg had told poor Bertha that the Countess Linden kron was violently in love with him, but he could not respond to her passion.

Bertha believed religiously every word the vile braggart said, and was convinced that he, a rich baron, would marry her, the daughter of a poor fruit seller.

"What were the circumstances connected with Bertha?" said Unzer.

"Oh, Maria and Joseph! I had forgotten something most important," cried Fanny, hastening to a bureau, from a drawer of which she drew out a fine camel's hair shawl, which she laid upon the table. "I hope you will not think I was wrong in buying this shawl from the hostess at the price she asked for it."

"What about the shawl?" said Schröder, surprised.

"Ask Mademoiselle Ackerman to whom she gave this shawl," said Fanny, "last autumn." When she met Schröder's stern eyes, she assumed an expression of the deepest emotion, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, with emphasis:

"God and the saints know, I have ever considered it an evil omen that Mademoiselle Ackerman was so compassionate to the child of this base man!"

There is a superstition amongst common people, that no one should look long upon the dead body of one who died in great wretchedness. It is said that the same fate which broke the heart of the deceased will cling to the heels of the curious observer.

"Just as Bertha's coffin was about to be closed, fate led Mademoiselle Ackerman by the door, and she entered the house. The child of the Baron was handed to her over the coffin of the dead mother. I alone knew the name of the father. Mademoiselle felt a heavenly pity for the poor infant, and wrapped it in this shawl."

"Stop!" cried Schröder, no longer master of himself, and springing from his seat, while Unzer became white as death.

The discovery that Sylberg was the father of the child in whom he had taken such an interest for Charlotte's sake, coupled with his abhorrence of the man, made his agitation greater even than Schröder's.

At last he recovered himself, and asked Madam Fanny how she knew that Sylberg was the father of the child?

Fanny was visibly embarrassed at this question, but resolved to tell the truth, and thus obtain the full confidence of the gentlemen.

She told them that Bertha's mother lived in Hamburg, and would confirm all her statements; she was a widow of the name of Gades, lived in a cellar, and maintained herself honestly by selling fruit. She was a brave and stern mother, and the rich presents which the Baron had sent to her and Bertha were returned with contempt. Sylberg at last convinced the poor child that he would certainly marry her, and she left her mother's house. What would have become of the poor girl if I had not taken pity on her? Her mother would never again receive her. The Baron was devoted to her, and still promised marriage. Suddenly he disappeared from Hamburg and went to Schleswig. And now Bertha's short dream was over; her reason wandered. She left the house secretly, and threw herself into the river, but was rescued; she died a short time after, leaving this little child; refusing always to disclose the Baron's name.

"And what became of the child?" said Unzer, wishing to prove if Fanny would tell the truth in this respect.

"On that point I can give you no information," said the fortune-teller, embarrassed, "I only heard that it had been taken away by distinguished people. The Baron was at first disturbed on this account and offered a large sum of money for any positive information.

"I do not know what special interest he felt, certainly it was not fatherly love! I believe, myself, he was only afraid his conduct towards Bertha would be discovered, particularly since

he knew that Mademoiselle Ackerman had taken pity on the poor child.

"All other means having failed, he sent his crafty old negro after night to the old woman, to inquire after the child, and to threaten her with death if she refused to tell him what had become of it. That was the night when you, Herr Doctor, were called to the bed of the wounded woman, whom Olaf had stabbed with his long Indian knife.

"This is all I know of the child, so true as I am a good Catholic Christian."

"I thank you! You have done me a great service, madam," said Schröder, breathing heavily.

"Now, give me your simple word that you will preserve a most profound silence as to all that you have now told me, and you will find me grateful."

Fanny called heaven and earth to witness that she would do anything in her power for the renowned "Herr Actor;" but her terror of the Herr Doctor, who belonged to the public authorities, had more weight with her than all her solemn oaths and assurances.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CHARLOTTE had as little suspicion of the violent rupture of her love affair as of the terrible disclosures which were now awaiting her.

She was wholly occupied with the happiness of her love. Even her art, the dazzling lustre of which had shed a glory over her whole life, had given way to this new feeling. It seemed as if her genius had only been satisfied in the world of poetic illumination and beautiful illusions, till an inexplicable desire after truer happiness had driven her to other objects.

The glitter of fame, which had overshadowed her youth, had paled before the passion of love in this imaginative heart, and her first kiss taught her the difference between a living love and all that her fancy had painted, and all the poets had sung; all those emotions and humors, gay and sorrowful, which she had often played upon the stage.

Played! yes, that was the right word for all that she had dreamed as an actress, and by the aid of her rare gifts had represented upon the stage.

Now, she had no need to enter into an ideal existence now she had discovered another talent—the talent of loving. It bore no laurels of fame, but promised the roses of blissful happiness.

This was now, in her opinion, the only life worth living, and her passionate nature seized upon it tumultuously. She longed to escape from the weight of the contradictory impressions, the ever-changing feelings and passions of the stage into some higher and surer sphere of existence. She did not need the gay painted scenes, or the applause of men to be happy, and it pained her to think that now she was forced to show the best part of her character in the deceitful light of the coulisse lamps.

Sylberg was exactly the man to flatter the romantic tastes of a young girl's heart, who saw in love the culminating point of

her existence, in whom every nerve was poetry, every emotion ardor and sincerity.

How could such a nature, when yielding itself for the first time to love, look upon her lover in any other light than as the noblest and most unselfish of men? Her whole soul was spread out before him as an open book. How could she suspect him of being faithless or untrue? Was it her only vanity that this man alone was capable of awakening her most beautiful feelings and returning them?

We seek in vain in Sylberg for those high qualities of intellect and character which gave him such worth in Charlotte's eyes.

That which was wanting in him, however, the deficiencies which all who made his acquaintance discovered, was richly supplied by the prodigality of her love. A warm and pure heart like that of our young friend, almost of necessity adorns the man it loves with all its own worth and nobility of soul.

All, however, who knew of Charlotte's attachment to this man found it inexplicable. No one found the key to this enigma. The young actress was by the power of this love swept onward, and more and more estranged from her former being and life.

On the day in which Bertha's child was buried at St. Michael's Church, Charlotte had left the house in the gayest mood to visit her friend Madam Unzer. The Major was to find her there by accident; in the mean time she hoped to have a quiet hour to chat with her old friend, to talk with her of Dorothea's love for the Doctor, and to arrange the plan by which they would bring these young people, so exactly suited to each other, together for time and for eternity.

Charlotte knew that this was the most agreeable theme to the old lady, and she had already offered her zealous aid to bring about the result so ardently hoped for.

She had told the old Frau that although loving him ardently herself, Dorothea had done all in her power to induce her to look favorably upon Unzer's suit. Since that time the mother had resolved that her dear son must and should return this

noble self-sacrificing love. She had already given him to understand, more plainly than was agreeable to him, that there was no hope for him with Charlotte, as she had bestowed her heart upon another.

Unzer was not exactly as yet inclined to his mother's opinion ; that as Charlotte could never be his, the hand of heaven pointed directly to Dorothea as the only wife suited to him ; but there was a struggle going on in his interior life. He knew by his own agony what Dorothea must have suffered on his account, and now on account of her sister.

We are, however, in these pages occupied with the history of another heart. We will only therefore say that, without knowing the why and wherefore, Unzer felt his grief and disappointment assuaged when his thoughts rested upon the sister of her who had disdained his love, and that Dorothea's living image at last took that place in his heart which the dead Charlotte had filled.

Now all was in the best train for a satisfactory result to both mother and son. Notwithstanding Unzer's occasional melancholy, the mother's loving eye discovered signs of new life, new hopes in her son.

Cheered by these happy presentiments, Charlotte's visit was most welcome. The happiness of her young friend was indeed almost as dear to her as that of her son. So, by the inscrutable decree of fate, while Unzer and Schröder were receiving with horror the terrible disclosures of Fanny at Kugelsort over Sylberg's character and past life, Charlotte and her friend were exhausting themselves in eulogies over the same man ; and Frau Unzer declared, more in earnest than in jest, that she had but one great fear—the faults of the Major bore so small a proportion to his virtues, that Charlotte would never be called upon to exercise the most beautiful feminine prerogative, patience.

“On that point you may be satisfied, my love,” said Charlotte, laughing. “If I possessed it, I might have constant opportunities for its exercise. He is so wild, so passionate, so

discontented in his love, that I have to use all my authority to make him obedient and submissive."

"If the King's consent would only come," said the old lady, shaking her head. "I have lost my patience on that point. Why should a King take weeks and months to say yes, for he will scarcely say no? They must know in Copenhagen, as well as in Hamburg, that the recruiting officer has made a rare capture."

"I beseech you, dear Lotte, urge the Major to get the consent as soon as possible."

"You lovers never think of what is most needful, and it is indeed highly important that this insufferable indecision in this affair should come to a close. The constant visits of the Major to your house are everywhere a subject of conversation. It is well that Dorothea is in the house, and no one knows to which of the two sisters the handsome cavalier is so zealously making court."

"You are right, dear Sophie. It is insupportable that the King makes us wait so long for this consent. I care but little for the speculations of the Hamburgers, but the faces grow longer at home day by day, and Fritz, by his frosty tolerance, makes me feel that his last word has not been spoken. Were they all in violent opposition to my love, they could not torture me more than they do, by their suspicions and impatience."

"It is well for me that I know the cause of all this persecution."

"You know, also, that your lover is constant," said her friend. "Constancy is the safest compass in the storms of life. I say to you young people who go mad over Werther and Clarissa, and place love above everything in life, that the proverb, 'True as gold,' is of more worth than all the moonshine and pistol phrases of your Goethe."

"Apropos, Lotte. What says your bridegroom of the Countess Linden kron's return to the city? Does he really know her, or was that only an idle scandal which connected his name with hers?"

"Not altogether the latter," said Charlotte, smiling. "Sylberg has told me that the Countess had given him undoubted proofs of her love, which he passed by unnoticed, out of consideration for the Count. From the picture which he has drawn for me of this lady, I should not think her calculated to attract a noble gentleman. He considers her a cunning coquette and a dangerous intriguer, and even before her marriage she was mixed up in that terrible intrigue against the unhappy Queen Caroline Matilda."

"How easily we are deceived in the characters of men, or rather in their countenances!" said the old lady, thoughtfully. "This morning I was in a store in the Admiral's street, and the Countess Lindenkron and her companion came in to make some purchases, and I could not turn away my eyes from her interesting countenance. She must have seen that I was observing her curiously. On leaving the store she gave me a kindly greeting, which seemed to say, 'I know the old Frau of Steinweg better than she knows me.'"

"And so this innocent and lovely countenance belongs to a coquette and intriguer? This lies like a stone upon my heart! I thought to myself if Max von Sylberg or any other man has had his head turned by this lovely creature, it is not surprising; but a common love affair can no man play with such heavenly eyes."

"You can trust my report fully," said Charlotte, with warmth. "Max knows the whole history of her life; he is certainly not disposed to speak evil of this lady, the widow of his best friend; he tries to excuse her, indeed, and says that a false education and a natural levity of character have led her into these errors."

"Well, we poor mortals will never know each other," said Frau Unser, dejectedly; and she then commenced to tell how many times she had been deceived in people of education and character, when Charlotte uttered a cry of joy, and sprang forward to meet the Major, who had entered the room unobserved, and had been closely watching them.

In the joy over his arrival, Charlotte did not at first remark that Sylberg's manner was not as affectionate and unembarrassed as usual. When the light fell upon his features, she discovered that he was grave to solemnity, and that his glance fell restlessly and searchingly upon her from time to time.

He was disquieted with the uncertainty as to whether Charlotte was acquainted with the events of the day before. Her playful and gay manner soon convinced him of her ignorance as to his contest with her brother, but still he felt in the open sea, and knew not how to steer his course.

What possible motive could have moved Schröder, who had acted with such violence to the lover, to have spared his sister altogether?

It was evident he had said not one word to Charlotte as to the deadly insult he had offered him.

This convinced Sylberg that Schröder did not yet fully understand the man he was unmasking, and did not comprehend the means he was using to separate his sister from her family.

The Major was now only occupied by a bitter feeling of revenge towards the imperious and arrogant Theatre Director and his family, and he was resolved, cost what it would, to take vengeance on them for the humiliations of the evening before.

We have, unfortunately, to deal with a hero who was not easily turned aside from any step which gratified his selfishness. How could he, who had almost won that which was now about to be wrested from him, do otherwise than hold fast to this treasure, when, by so doing, he could wound the heart of his insulter to the quick?

In the morning he had almost given up the hope of obtaining Charlotte's hand; he was now resolved to pursue her more eagerly than ever. He was now determined to make use of this love of an innocent heart, which had up to this time only gratified his romance and vanity, as an instrument of revenge by which he would chain Charlotte to himself, and separate her for ever from her family.

This was not his first rehearsal in the art of intrigue, and he

knew that those were most easily deceived, whose simple, candid natures were unsuspecting of treachery.

Frau Unzer knew as little as Charlotte, what strange emotions were agitating Major Sylberg; she attributed his constraint to the presence of his beloved. She concluded to leave them alone for a few moments, upon some household pretence.

"How pale you are to-day, Max," said Charlotte anxiously, "are you unwell, or is something wrong?"

Sylberg seized her hand with passionate tenderness, and exclaimed in a most excited tone: "God be praised! nothing is wrong, now, that I see you once more and look again into your faithful loving eyes; now indeed, I feel, that no power on earth can ever separate you from me. Oh! forgive me, Charlotte, but I have passed a day of agony on your account!"

"Heavens, Max! your words fill me with anxiety," she exclaimed, in a terrified voice. "What mighty power could have influenced you to doubt your Charlotte's love for one moment, much less a whole dreary day? Speak! beloved, what wicked enemy has disturbed our happiness? The 'blue devils' only are torturing you. How could any one think in earnest of separating us, when even my mother is on your side?"

"As far as it is in the power of men to separate us, we are already separated," said Sylberg in a hollow voice, and fixing a gloomy look upon the pale girl, now speechless with terror. "Yes, my beloved Charlotte, your house is already closed to me; your brother's conduct to me yesterday evening, when I took leave of him, was so insulting that it required the whole strength of my love not to forget what I owe to you and you alone. But for thee I would have held him accountable with my sword, for the offensive manner of his treatment to me, the guest of his house, the bridegroom of his sister. God knows, what crime he suspects me of, towards you and your family."

"What can have moved him to this," said Charlotte, who was now cold to her inmost heart.

"That did I hope to hear from you, my love," replied Sylberg,

“but look you, Charlotte, you know as well the ground of this violence against me, as I know myself. One thing alone can I surmise; he has obtained a knowledge of our secret interviews at Kugelsort, and this has enraged him so that he has forgotten all consideration and all decency in his conduct to me, as a gentleman and an officer. But thank God,” cried he, joyfully, and his countenance became illuminated, “what care I for all this, so long as my Charlotte will not desert me. Let me but obtain the King’s consent, and then let Herr Schröder say and do what he pleases. Your heart, dear love, my best possession, it is vain for him to contend for; then your hand, my sweet heavenly girl, shall be mine; then also shall he know whom he has insulted. Oh! when I think that the brother of my worshipped Charlotte—”

“No! call him not by that dear name,” said Charlotte scornfully. “So long as I have known him, he has been the enemy of my most cherished feelings; my constant tyrant, who sought to have as unlimited control over my intellectual life as he had over my outward conduct. I should be nothing, become nothing, which was not in harmony with his views. God only knows, how he derived this right over me.”

“I have often silently wondered at this, myself,” said Sylberg. “I tell you, Charlotte, it is nothing but an actor’s envy, which drives him to this conduct towards you. He knows too well that with all his study, with all his knowledge of art, he can never reach that point to which your genius has elevated you. I will not add to this, that he is by nature wicked, but, you must confess, that the arrogant manner in which he makes himself your teacher and master, and the concealed blame, which he mingles with the small praise he bestows upon you, shows his hostility.”

“But what shall we do?” said Charlotte, anxiously and restlessly. “You can, you will no more enter our house. Fritz will soon influence my mother and sister against you, every step I take will be watched, and it will become impossible for me to see you without the knowledge of my family.

“Ah! Max, now I do indeed believe that we are separated as far as it is in the power of man to separate us; but we must not lose courage, beloved.”

“God forbid. Then we should lose all,” said the Major, throwing his arm around her slender form.

“Yes, my beloved Rutland, now let us show to the world what true love dares! Fate is as hostile to us as it was to the two lovers at the court of the English Queen, and unites with mankind against our union, but love finds a way to its goal. The brave Rutland, even under the eyes of the jealous and cruel Queen, consents to a secret marriage with Essex, she mocks at all danger, risks all for her love, and my Charlotte, now that it lies in her power, will also unite herself to me for ever.”

“Ask of me what you will,” said Charlotte, decisively; but a deadly pallor overspread her countenance.

“Your brother has made it impossible for me to visit you; well, then we must seek a refuge where his power cannot reach us. One word to my Colonel, and I will be ordered to my regiment at Schleswig; will you follow me, Charlotte?”

“But we have not yet obtained the King’s consent,” she stammered, and the glow of modest shame took the place of the pallor of the previous moment.

“I need not persuade you to flight, my darling, if I had the hope to lead you at once to the altar in Hamburg,” cried Sylberg, with painful emotion; “it is this delay which drives me to despair.”

“I am sitting here upon a forlorn hope, and all my letters which I send to Copenhagen seem to answer no purpose. I am convinced that the King’s consent has been lying for weeks in his Majesty’s drawer, but the thoughtless monarch forgets, in the midst of the childish sports with which he amuses his courtiers, his most simple duties. This would all be changed if I could get permission to go from Schleswig to Copenhagen in person and demand this consent; but I see already,” said he, sighing heavily, while a bitter smile played about his lips, “I

see that you have more patience than myself, otherwise you would say frankly, yes, to all which could hasten our marriage."

At this reproof Charlotte was seized with a violent trembling, her eyes filled with tears, and she exclaimed painfully :

"How falsely do you judge my heart! even because I love you tenderly, do I shrink back from the consequences of this step, the necessity of which I cannot see. Say, yourself, is this extreme measure needful? Is there no other way to obtain the King's consent? Why should I fly with you to Schleswig, overwhelm my family with such a weight of sorrow, and destroy my own good name? Better far that I should wait in Hamburg till the consent is obtained. I implore you, dearest Max, to reconsider this matter."

"So, you think thus!" said Sylberg slowly, and looking at her with an expression of mingled embarrassment and distrust. After a pause he said with great bitterness :

"Forsooth, Charlotte, I had not suspected you of such timidity. You consider such a step wholly unnecessary, and yet you see that we may soon be placed in a position where our hands will be completely tied, and we can do nothing. Can you doubt that your brother will do everything to make our marriage impossible? That he will influence your mother to withdraw her consent; that he will contrive the most wicked and horrible charges against me to make me despised?

"Oh, Charlotte, only wait! He will no longer restrain his enmity against me, and I believe him to be a man who will pursue a plan with inflexible purpose, without regard to the means which may be necessary to accomplish his aim. I would be willing to swear that he has not yet given up the hope of marrying you to his pale friend, the Doctor, even yet.

"You seem to me to have a strong faith in this admirable brother of yours, though you have told me many things of his past life which place his character in a doubtful point of view. It was not without cause that the Jesuits, in his youth, fixed their eyes upon him and tried to win him to their service."

"Yes," said Charlotte, sadly; "he told me that himself. And yet I cannot believe him to be so cunning, so vile!"

"Well, let it pass, child! I wish you no fearful experience with him," said Sylberg, with reserve. "At all events, since yesterday evening I know him to be a man who conceals his selfish interests as Director of the theatre behind the cloak of brotherly love most admirably. He knows that you are lost to the stage for ever when you become the Baroness von Sylberg. There lies the secret of his brotherly love to you, and his hatred against me."

At this moment Frau Unzer returned, and interrupted the conversation of the lovers. She saw at once that they were both excited, and that the course of love was not running smooth. This brought care to the old lady's heart. She had been joyfully proud in regarding herself as the protectress of this happy love affair. The only thing which comforted her was the thought that it was now the mode for young people to raise up obstacles and difficulties in their own paths, by way of making their love the sweeter—a mode which found its source in the sentimental caprices produced by the romantic literature of the day, and which now seemed to reign in every circle of society.

Sylberg had won her favor by his primitive cool nature and his artless, natural feelings, free, as she thought, from all sentimentality. She was convinced that the opposites in his character and Charlotte's would insure their happiness, and now she was greatly provoked to find him with his head hanging down, and a glance of melancholy in his eye, as if he was brooding over some gloomy plan of desperation.

This was more than she could bear patiently; and she asked the Baron angrily and mockingly, if his pistols were loaded, and why he did not put on the languishing yellow vest, such as young Werther had worn.

Sylberg exclaimed, with forced gayety: "Look now, Charlotte, what you have made of me; our friend sees in my countenance, that I have the knife almost at my throat, and you call me a lovelorn hypochondriac. Is it not enough, madam, to

make me desperate, that I have a sweetheart who thinks it of no consequence, if the King's consent comes to-day, or in four weeks? I suppose we cannot think of a wedding before the summer, because of the detestable trousseau!"

Sylberg accompanied these words with a significant and imperious glance, which taught Charlotte that she must deceive her friend as to the cause of their dispute, and lead her to believe that the trousseau was the difficulty.

The good old lady comforted them as well as she could; declared it was more important than young lovers generally supposed. In her day, immense linen-presses and heavy trunks were considered the best prognostics for a happy marriage. She succeeded in cheering the Baron, but Charlotte remained cast down and silent; every word her lover had spoken, weighed like lead upon her soul, and she thought with shuddering horror of all that was before her, ere she could reach the goal, which but a few hours ago had seemed so near at hand.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHARLOTTE returned home in the most feverish excitement, and passed by the sitting-room, up the steps, into her own room ; firmly resolved as she was to hold fast to her love, she felt that her strength threatened to forsake her before the hour of combat.

The Major had, on their way home, with stormy tenderness, and using all the power he possessed over her heart, endeavored to persuade her of the necessity of their flight from Hamburg. He tried to convince her, that in the eyes of the world, this would be regarded as a most heroic step, that she would thus show a proper resentment towards Schröder for the injury he had done her lover, and make his cause her own ; he also declared that her withdrawal from the house would be the only satisfaction which he could accept for the insults offered him. He swore solemnly that she should not follow him to Schleswig, but should take refuge with a relation of his, a woman of rank, until the marriage took place. Almost overcome, she could make no other reply to his arguments, than that she would conform herself to his wishes, as soon as her mother should withdraw her consent to her marriage.

“Then, in God’s name, my mother must bear the fruit of her own cruelty ; then I will be yours, and follow you wherever you wish,” said she, on taking leave of him. A few minutes later, she found herself alone in her own room, and thought once more tremblingly over this unhappy turn in her affairs. She felt suddenly palsied ; and a thousand terrible anxieties martyred her soul. One thing she knew in advance, that in the struggle with her brother, she must go down ; from her early childhood, she had witnessed the influence he had exercised over her mother and sister. Sylberg had only too well convinced her that her brother’s dislike to him was the result of selfish calculation ; she became convinced that Schröder would hold her fast, even

violently, upon the stage, if violence should once be necessary ; and the romantic idea took possession of her, that Schröder had insulted the Major so unpardonably, in order to force him to be faithless and to desert her. This suspicion, which in any other mood, she would have known to be utterly inconsistent with her brother's character, excited a vehement scorn in her breast against the supposed author of her misery.

In a few moments her passion gave way to an icy coldness ; she was so embittered by his artifice, as to return evil for evil ; to meet his cunning with still greater cunning ; to seem to be utterly harmless and unsuspecting as to any malicious intent against her lover, and to yield seemingly implicit obedience to all their commands.

Charlotte was, by nature, frank and noble, and that such a plan should arise in her heart, and should ripen at once to a sure conclusion, shows the boundless errors into which this love had betrayed her. She no longer knew how to distinguish the true from the false, and in the sad misconception of following the duty of her heart, she went astray into paths where the genius of innocence and truth found it almost impossible to contend against the powers of temptation, treachery and lies.

We are writing the tragic history of a young girl who, by the greatness of her genius, had an undisputed and incontestable claim to the love and admiration of her cotemporaries ; and she deserved, in a high degree, the interest and sympathy which the sad, momentous history of her love and fate produced long after her rich young life, which had created such high hopes, had passed away, and nothing was left but the sweet name which had been so renowned for beauty, grace and genius.

Better hands than ours have long ago given her an honored place by the side of the noble and the beautiful, who graced and adorned the stage at that most glittering period.

The humane reader will, no doubt, wonder how a maiden, of such rare qualities of heart and intellect, could wander so far from the sure path of her genius, into such dangerous and romantic delusions.

Is not this, however, the history of many a noble heart? Are not such characters the most easily deceived? They confide in the purity of their own emotions, and hope to find that in real life which is but an impossible ideal of the soul! Have you not often seen men whose whole existence has been dedicated to the pure service of genius and the muses, lost to themselves and to the world from the moment their passions led them to another shrine?

There is truly a vast difference between that undying fire from Heaven which we call poetry, and which kindles the great heart of humanity, and that strengthening, nourishing fire of the household hearth by which the peaceful household gods establish their altars. That promethean spark is more dazzling than all the oil-lamps of this every-day world, and it leads the soul which it has once illumined to another destiny than that which results from a common every-day life. Charlotte was a child in years, but a rare and heaven-constituted priestess in the temple of art. How could she have felt and acted less genially, confidently, in her love than in her art—that element of her soul! She believed that love sprang from the same source as art and poetry; that all three were angelic daughters of the same Father, and that freedom, enthusiasm and self-sacrifice were necessary to win either.

- Her romantic feelings and rich intellect had been early developed and nourished by her life upon the stage; it was a period characterized by excessive sensibility and sentiment; and it is no matter of surprise that a child of happiness and fame, of Charlotte's passionate temperament and tender nervous organization, should be allured into an altogether new direction by the passion of love.

Long before this unhappy history with Sylberg, Schröder realized this danger; and this fear is a simple and true explanation of his anxious, undecided conduct. This led him to turn weakly aside from the struggle before him, till it was too late for him and for his sister.

Charlotte had certainly expected some positive action on the part of her family that evening, but in this she was mistaken.

The atmosphere of the little circle was cloudy and threatening, and when she entered both her mother and Dorothea showed traces of great agitation and dejection, while Schröder, with his hands crossed behind him, paced the room with long strides, and scarcely replied to Charlotte's greeting. The reader may suppose that we see the family, at the moment when Schröder had just returned from Kugelsort and had related to his mother and sister all that Madam Fanny had told him of Sylberg. Madam Ackerman and Dorothea were almost speechless with astonishment and horror, scarcely knowing at first whether to thank Heaven for this timely warning, or to tremble at the fatal consequences which might still follow this engagement.

The history of the unhappy Bertha, and her child, who had so strangely disappeared, and who had been so much spoken of, affected Dorothea violently. The pious mother thanked Heaven for the safety of her child.

At last Schröder told them what had passed between Sylberg and himself at the door the evening before, and his conduct was fully approved, though Dorothea feared it was easier to drive the Major from the house than from Charlotte's heart.

The conversation was interrupted by Charlotte's entrance, but so painful was the oppression left upon their hearts that they had only been saved from the greatest misery by a wonderful interposition of Providence, that they could not resolve to disclose all to Charlotte at once, and thus bring on a new storm of passion. It was Madam Ackerman's inexorable will that the subject should not be approached that evening, and Dorothea insisted upon it that Charlotte should be, in some degree, prepared, before the baseness of that man should be disclosed for whose love she had been willing to barter, or at least to risk, her own and her family's good name.

Schröder considered the affair at an end; that he might not be called to do anything more to lead his sister back to the path of duty.

The evening passed by silently but undisturbed. Charlotte knew, however, by intuition, that she would have a hard battle to fight the next morning.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE author of all this care and anxiety in the Ackerman family was reminded, early the next morning, in a way but little flattering to himself, that favor is deceitful.

He received an elegant note, whose perfume seemed to promise some new adventure; but upon opening it what was his surprise to find that it was from his worthy friend from Kugelsort! She declared to him curtly, that he should not again enter her house. Sylberg knew that Madam Fanny had some dangerous proofs against him, and the tone of her letter led him to fear that she had already betrayed him.

"Now everything is clear to me!" he cried, in a rage. "She is the Delphic oracle from whom this proud comedian has drawn his information. She has betrayed my interviews with Charlotte. But wait, serpent, you shall repent! and you, Herr Schröder! Oh, if I only knew the extent of this woman's perfidy! Has she dared to give Bertha's history? I fear I have committed myself too far with this woman; she knows of Olaf's stupid attempt; and she has possession of my letter to Bertha. Sylberg, Sylberg! what incredible folly! Schröder was right when he declared it was easier to play the part of Iago amongst honest people than amongst scoundrels."

The Major felt no regret for his dishonorable conduct to this worthy family. He knew that this affair with Charlotte was but an ebullition of his hot blood, characterized by the same levity and folly which had marked all his past life.

He imagined that he loved Charlotte, because his vanity was flattered, and it pleased his adventurous character to unite with his fate a girl of her rare gifts, grace, and intellect. He hoped, indeed, that her celebrity and her purity would build up his almost ruined reputation. But he was scarcely in possession of her heart when his ordinary assurance forsook him. He felt the gulf which separated him from this noble, loving nature;

but he was a man of the world, and knew enough of the hearts of women to conceal this want of true earnestness and purity of feeling behind a fiery enthusiasm. He was a rare dissembler, and he practised upon Charlotte's innocence by leading her to believe that her love exercised a beneficial influence upon him. In his intercourse with her he was soft, yielding and grateful, led her to believe that she could mould and govern his proud and defiant character. This is the most dangerous of all deceptions to every good heart. He assured her, "that she was the first person who had awaked his better life and reconciled him to his past fate."

The thought of marrying Charlotte was, for a long time, so little disagreeable to him that he strove earnestly to win the good will of her family, and left nothing undone which could recommend him and advance his suit. We know also that he had written to his friend, Major T., of Copenhagen, to obtain the King's consent to his marriage, and we will state here that the letter had reached Major T.'s hands at the right time.

The Baron waited from week to week for an answer, and could not comprehend his friend's strange silence. He had often given him help and assistance on former occasions, and now, when it would cost him so little effort, he did not even write to give the grounds of his hesitation. Altogether, this silence placed him in a most embarrassing position towards his sweetheart and her family.

At last the long-wished for letter arrived. But what did it contain? Even Sylberg, with all his frivolity and want of principle, was surprised at its levity. Major T. announced that he would make the desired request of the King, as soon as he knew certainly which of the two persons involved in this foolish affair had lost their reason.

"Is it you, friend Sylberg, or the little Madmoiselle Ackerman? In the name of Heaven, are you a candidate for the madhouse? Well, marriage will soon banish delirium from your heads and hearts. I beseech you to reflect if there is no other conclusion to this love comedy than the every-day result of mar-

riage. I tell you frankly, brother, your last letter has inspired me with some doubt as to your reason.

“You wish to marry—you—and *I* shall obtain permission for you! Can you, in earnest, conceive of such horrible treachery against our friendship? Imagine, now, that I had really visited the King, and obtained his consent, which would, of course, be instantly granted. Your hand upon your heart, brother, what would you think of me? I will tell you, and as a proof that I know you as I know myself, I will write the monologue which you would utter as soon as you received his Majesty’s consent.

“ ‘Donner and blitzen! To think that the best friend I have in the world should bring this trouble upon me! What was I thinking of? There lies that sorry scrap of paper which condemns me to wretchedness for life, and I have to thank the untimely zeal of Friend T. for it! He should have known that I am sometimes absent-minded, and do then exactly the opposite of what I wish. But I understand this faithless friend; he is envious of my good fortune with a lady of rank and renown.

“ ‘This hypocritical friend knew me to be jesting, and yet he gives my petition to the King, and the good monarch, knowing by long experience the wedding zeal of his officers, grants his gracious assent, and I—, well, I shall think as little of marriage with his consent as without it. What the King allows is not his command, fortunately!’

“Thus, under those circumstances, would my dear Max speak, while now he may fall down on his knees and thank God for a comrade who understands him. I tell you, Max, you do not yourself know where your dissimulation ceases, and your true man begins.

“Zounds! Have you entirely forgotten that you have stood twice upon the point of taking this same step which you now propose with the little Theatre Princess? You have twice applied for the King’s consent, and only escaped by a hair’s-breadth, exchanging your gay life for Hymen’s sad barrack service. I am splitting my brain over this psychological enigma

in you. You are the arrogant despiser and declared enemy of all domestic life, and yet you now propose to make a martyr of yourself. Have you not often sworn that marriage was as insipid and tasteless in your eyes as the show-window of a hair-dresser, with its wax figures and rouge-pots?

“And you are asking permission to marry? You, who have never been constant more than three days! whose daily song has been that you would rather die as a Turk than live as a Christian married man?

“But why recall the words and principles of your past life? Let us look at your present circumstances, and see if they are more favorable to your project of marriage than your life’s philosophy would be.

“You have written to me that Charlotte has no considerable fortune. I therefore conclude that her fortune does not exist. Now tell me, frankly, Sylberg, how do you propose to maintain a family? With your officer’s pay, or with the patience of your creditors, or with the expectation of an inheritance from your rich and penurious aunt?

“You are a merry and adroit fellow, gifted with what the French call ‘noble effronterie,’ and you understand the art admirably of playing the gallant cavalier at the expense of others. You have credit, for the usurers lend you what you ask, because they are convinced you will wed no woman who has not at least a ton of gold. And now, friend, picture to yourself the wild horror of your creditors, the dismayed Niobe glance of your proud patrician and severely religious aunt, when they hear that Baron Sylberg has wedded an actress from the Hamburg stage.

“How quickly would the chests of gold close relentlessly; how quickly would the gracious aunt revoke her testament and withdraw her hand in time and in eternity from her incorrigible and debauched nephew.

“In short, I assure you, Max, you will ruin your whole existence by this marriage; and if you put your last trust in the paymaster who, up to this time, has paid you regularly every

month, so remember simply the paragraph 115 in the Royal Danish Military Code, in which the officers are forbidden to incur debts, and the half of their pay is to be retained, if necessary, to satisfy their creditors.

"You know that I am a bad accountant, but I can reach this result, that you and your Galotti must live a hundred years before you would be in the full receipt of your pay.

"You are probably laughing now at my taking so much pains to reason you out of an act you have never seriously thought of committing. I have remarked heretofore, that when you have spoken of marriage, you were generally rather weary of your love, and were longing for a change of quarters.

"I cannot explain why I am at this time really anxious about you. I cannot believe that you are thinking of marriage in earnest. Take care, Sylberg, or you will get yourself into a *fix*, where neither your wit nor diplomacy can help you. You have written to me that the maiden is good and lovely, that her family have a distinguished position throughout all Germany, even with royal persons, and that Charlotte is the idol of Hamburg. Think of Icarus, Max, and remember his wings.

"My counsel is, get out of the affair as well and as quickly as possible, before the family or the public are acquainted with it.

"Be on your guard, and make a respectable and prudent retreat; this is one of the best tactics of a good general.

"Who knows where your meadow may be blooming? But no romantic folly—no theatrical attitudes. Withdraw to some other recruiting point or you will be in trouble."

Thus wrote Major T. to Sylberg, and although the letter had no effect upon the circumstances we are acquainted with, it is certain that Sylberg was much struck with his friend's arguments and view of the case, and did not think then or afterwards of contending with him.

One moment he grumbled fiercely at T., the next moment he thought him right; and for one morning the fatal letter threw him into a state of wild desperation, in which he conceived the

most adventurous projects. In spite of his lowering star he would wed Charlotte, send in his resignation, and go with her to America or the East Indies, and commence a new career.

If he had felt at this moment any calling to the stage, he might have exchanged his dragoon's saddle for the buskin, and rivalled Schröder, Eckhof and Brockmann. At one moment he thought of taking post-horses for Copenhagen, and falling in full parade uniform at his aunt's feet. But he suddenly remembered that he had already performed this theatrical coup several times. Who could know how she would receive it; she might suspect he was on his knees more for her gold than for her blessing, and then, good-night, inheritance! He knew she was carrying on a zealous correspondence with the church at Herrnhut; was an enthusiast for Count Zinzendorf, &c. "I think I will do well," he said to himself, "to reserve my third and last act on my knees for a case of dire necessity!"

Under these circumstances, he concluded to let the affair alone, but to appear to his beloved and her family as if he were waiting most impatiently, from day to day, for the royal consent. He was himself almost convinced that his engagement would end differently from what he had at first thought; he saw no other way, but either to break off violently this game he had been playing with a noble heart, or to carry on the comedy which, so far, had been favorable to him, and leave the result to chance.

He was led, perhaps, to adopt the latter course by his vanity, by Charlotte's personal attractions, and by the peculiarity of his relations to this intellectual and highly-gifted girl. He did not dare either to compromise his reputation in this affair, or to make an open scandal; so he left this betrayed, deceived heart, to dream on its beautiful youth-dream, without suspicion.

Any other man than the revengeful Sylberg would have slyly and wisely withdrawn after the insults and punishment received from Schröder. The Baron thought of this course, only so long as he doubted of Charlotte's state of mind. He was no sooner convinced, however, that her love for him far

outweighed all considerations for her family, than he came to a firm resolve to make the breach between them and herself complete, and to exercise his power over her heart and will, so as to revenge, if possible, the shame which Schröder had put upon him, and to enjoy the triumph of destroying the reputation of an honorable family.

Led by these dark plans of revenge, we see him now turning all his thoughts and actions to this object.

Schröder had held a glass before him, in which he could see the characteristics of Iago, and Sylberg was not the man to pardon one piercing glance into the depths of his soul.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CHARLOTTE passed the early hours of the following morning in the most painful indecision in her room. How should she turn aside the fearful storm which awaited her, when she entered the presence of her mother? Under the pretence of studying the role of Minna von Barnhelm, she delayed till she believed breakfast was over, and her brother gone to the opera house; then with a trembling heart, she entered her mother's room. No one was with her but Dorothea; but in the countenance of both, Charlotte read her approaching fate. Her mother looked at her with a steady grave look, as Charlotte drew near and took her hand to kiss it; she withdrew it hastily, and pointing to the table, said in a cold tone:

‘Breakfast, Lotte, then I will tell you what is on my heart.’

Silently Lotte obeyed the command, and seated herself; when she attempted to cut the bread, however, she trembled so violently that the knife fell from her hand.

Her eyes filled with tears, she sought in vain to check them; rose hastily, and was about to leave the room.

“Stop!” cried Frau Ackerman, in a commanding tone, and with a scornful flashing glance, which was most strange in her kindly eyes; “you seem to wish to avoid hearing your mother’s opinion; perhaps you will take refuge with your charming Baron, and escape the just reproaches of your mother and sister.

“Yes! yes! look at me with those great eyes. You two go charmingly together; God alone knows which of you is the best comedian, you or your red-coat.

“Ah, Lotte! speak sincerely; where was your heart, your manners, your morals, when you followed this man to the Portuguese Jew’s? Charlotte, what was it that made death sweet and honorable, even from a father’s hand, to Virginia and Emilia—is innocence and honor only of value on the stage—is it there

alone, that a noble woman will walk joyfully to death, for sweet honor's sake—is art only a hypocritical sport, with beautiful feelings and exalted virtues, which in real life are trodden under foot with disdain?

“Your blessed father was of another opinion! In his view, no amount of talent or fame could cover up a faulty character, or an evil life, in an actor. How often have I heard him say that an actor should represent men as they are upon the stage, but in life he should show to the world what a man should be.”

Here, the worthy mother paused, and seemed to expect that Charlotte would attempt to justify herself; she sat, however, pale and motionless before her, with her eyes fixed staringly upon the floor, and spoke no word in reply. Was it the consciousness of her guilt which made an answer impossible—was it that she now began to execute her resolve to make no open opposition to the will of her family, but to hold fast, in silence, firmly to her love?

This continued silence exasperated her mother still more, and led to the conviction that Charlotte was far from being sincerely repentant for her fault; this conclusion was not unreasonable, when she remembered Charlotte's great fault, and her reserved and wilful conduct for some time past.

Dorothea, who saw her mother's heart, and wished to prevent any more violent outbreak of scorn, now said, with profound emotion:

“Oh, Lotte! how often did I warn you about this man! but in your blind sentimentality you would not believe me! mocked my anxieties, and were ever ready to defend him!

“Receive it as you will, in God's name; but I say to you that you have been more horribly deceived by him than we have been deceived by you. Infatuated by his flatteries, you have, with unpardonable levity, played with your own good name and that of your family. Yes, poor girl, this Sylberg who deludes you with such tender feelings is a common scoundrel, without heart or conscience, who is indifferent as to whom he betrays. He it was who brought poor Bertha to an early and sorrowful grave.

Lotte, I tell you the truth, as true as I am your sister. That unhappy creature, whom you saw in her coffin at Kugelsort, was Sylberg's victim, and that child whom you wished to protect after the poor young mother's death, was his."

It is difficult to describe the effect of this frightful announcement upon Charlotte, who was evidently shocked, but recovered herself quickly. The whole story seemed to her so improbable, that she was almost convinced it was a deception, and that the fiction of the child was intended to separate her from her lover.

The evil seeds of jealousy, which the cunning Sylberg had so zealously sown in her heart against her own family, bore fruit more rapidly than even he could have hoped.

The unhappy suspicion that her mother and sister, even if from love to her, had sworn to use every weapon against the Baron, closed her heart to them. Under the intoxication of a wild passion, she knew but one enemy, and thought she had discovered that enemy in the most faithful and honest heart, which trembled for her happiness.

Charlotte maintained an obdurate silence, after Dorothea had ceased speaking, but the touching aspect of the pallid, quaking girl, subdued Madam Ackerman's rage and scorn, and a mother's love again filled her heart. She implored Charlotte almost prayerfully to confess her fault to herself and to God, and to despise a man whose past life had been vile and base, and behind whose fair exterior a black and lying soul was concealed. She entreated her by the remembrance of her admirable father not to throw herself away upon an unworthy creature, whose heartless conduct to Bertha indicated too plainly what his life had been.

This speech from the convulsed heart of her mother forced Charlotte to break silence, and she exclaimed, in wild despair—

"Oh, you are right, best mamma, the man you picture deserves not my love. He should be despised from the depths of every honest soul, be suspected of every villany. But tell me, in God's name—you also, Dorothea, tell me—how is it possible that such a man, to say nothing of exterior advantages, should

enjoy, as Sylberg does, the consideration of the society in which he moves. Would he not have been unmasked, and branded a hundred times? Would a noble family, would God-fearing relations, whose letters to him he has allowed me to read, thus manifest their attachment, or even indeed permit him to hold any intercourse with them?

"You yourself have seen him daily in your house, and no one but Fritz has mistrusted him. Alas! he is unhappy. Believe me, dear mamma, a dark doom, which I myself do not understand, overshadows his past life. One who suffers, as he does, cannot be evil, cannot have low thoughts or tastes.

"Even if this story about Bertha is true, is he therefore such an unfeeling monster? There may be a thousand unknown circumstances to plead for him, and shall I—the only one in the world who understands him—shall I cast the first stone?"

"Away with all sophisms in favor of Byron Sylberg," cried her mother; "he is base, thoroughly base, otherwise he would have guarded you from a folly, and not enticed you into an imprudence."

Shuddering, but yet with a firm voice, Charlotte answered, after a pause, "I swear to you, best mamma, that I was at Madam Fanny's house several weeks before my engagement to the Baron, and that Sylberg only knew her through me."

"That is false!" exclaimed Frau Ackerman. "Fanny herself has confessed that he has been going in and out of her house for many years; go yourself and ask that wretched person, if you cannot trust your mother's words; she will make everything clear to you, and show you the letters which this noble recruiting officer wrote to Bertha. If this does not suffice, go to the old widow Gades; she will tell you the history of her unhappy daughter; you can take note of this, Lotte, and compare the tender flatteries and protestations by which he allured you from the path of duty."

In the midst of this vehement speech, Frau Unzer was announced. The old lady entered the sitting-room, accompanied by Schröder, who had met her on the street. Frau Unzer's

frightened countenance and disorderly toilette announced the anguish and haste with which she had rushed to Charlotte to comfort her, and to protect her from the rage of her mother ; she found her dear Lotte bathed in tears, and exclaimed in great agitation :

“ Ah ! my darling Lotte, I thought that they would torture you with their reproaches ; as if you had not heart-sorrow enough. What ! is your own mother without pity, and blazing with scorn against her daughter ? There’s more than one reason why she should have pity and indulgence for you. Are we not all to blame for your mistake and your unhappiness ? Did not this dissembler deceive you under our eyes and with our assistance ? Do not frown, and look at me so scornfully, Frau Ackerman, Lotte is innocent ! We, the aged, the experienced, should have seen more clearly ; were we not ourselves blinded and dazzled by the hypocrite ? Therefore you ought not to be so bitter against my poor Lotte ! Give up all useless reproaches. ‘ Things without remedy, should be without regard.’ Once for all, you know that I have had much to do with Lotte’s misfortunes, and I will not allow her to be tortured further. Leave her in peace, otherwise I will take her home with me.”

This energetic threat, which was known to be accompanied by an energetic will, had one good effect for Charlotte, it turned the scorn of her mother against the old lady.

Frau Ackerman and Schröder were much displeased with the influence Frau Unzer had exercised in this affair ; she had first favored the intercourse of the lovers, and allowed them to meet in her house.

Lotte’s mother therefore did not hesitate long to reply, but exclaimed, in bitter wrath, “ Nothing is wanting now but that our judicious friend should favor and defend Baron Sylberg ; from the beginning he has been her special favorite. In my eyes he is a scoundrel by profession ; there is nothing real about him but the treachery with which he effects his purposes. My heart was ever afraid of him, and even when attracted by his showy elegance, I always trembled for my love-sick daughter’s roman-

tic air castles. Yes, Schröder and myself were to blame, not to have understood this man at once !”

“ Yes, it is your *metier* to discover scoundrels ! As to myself, I will not deny that I was completely deceived by this man. I thought him an honorable gentleman and a perfect cavalier, and the only man I had ever known suited to Lotte. God, the all-wise, knows, that had there been one suspicion in my soul against him, he would never have been Lotte’s lover ! Yes, yes ! in spite of mother and brother, who comprehended him, and yet did not unmask him !”

“ Frau Unzer is right,” said Schröder, struggling painfully with himself. “ As true as there is a God in Heaven I am the only guilty one. Against my own firm conviction of the utter unworthiness of this man, I allowed him to visit at my house. You, best mother, were so attracted by him, that I allowed myself to be quieted by your security.”

During this conversation Charlotte had recovered her self-control, and protected by her friend she could demand of Schröder a connected statement of the Baron’s relations with Bertha. The fate of the unhappy child of Kugelsort made a deep impression upon her, particularly her accidental meeting with it before her acquaintance with Sylberg commenced. This seemed to her to be strangely interwoven with her own present and future ominous life ; a fatal superstition from which her sentimental heart immediately drew the conclusion that Sylberg was exactly the man selected for her by Providence.

But she was too guarded to express this thought. Frau Unzer declared Sylberg was the last man she would trust again without investigating him fully. With affectionate sympathy she tried to comfort Charlotte, and to depict to her the happiness of being released from him.

“ I would give much to speak with the Countess Linden kron about this man, and her former relations with him. His account was, of course, false, and all the slanders which he uttered were the offspring of his crafty, black soul. Fanny had ex-

pressed the suspicion that Sylberg meant harm to the dead Count, and there had been some scandal about a pistol shot.

"Well, we will think no more of him, Lotte. If you have the least bit of love to me write to him on the spot, and give him a full dismissal—three lines will be enough. Under the circumstances this will be the best scourge. Tell him that we despise him, that we all despise him. I will send him back this day his Indian present! I never wish to look on anything which will remind me of my blindness. Yes; I will return him his Bayadere robes quickly. Who knows what sort of a history this Danish braggart had with the beautiful Amany! Perhaps he himself is no other than that same lieutenant for whose sake the poor child of India suffered death by fire!

"Bear your sorrow and trial with strength and patience, Lotte. This is a part of life—our most cherished hopes often lead to our most bitter experiences; but the best men hold fast to their faith in humanity, though deceived by men.

"Adieu! Adieu! I will be in your latticed loge this evening, and I hope that my sweet Minna will not make Major Telheim suffer because of this sorrow Major Sylberg has cost her."

She embraced Charlotte affectionately, pressed the old lady heartily by the hand, and, as she passed Dorothea, she whispered to her in a trembling voice:

"Good Dorta, I have also a little crow to pick with you, but of another sort. Come to me this evening, after the play, and then you shall know that the good God has granted us a great joy in compensation for Lotte's sufferings."

"How can that be?" said Dorothea, and a rich crimson suffused her cheeks.

"It may be," said the old lady, "that God will give a sign to my poor, deceived Lotte in the happiness of her sister. Will show her how to distinguish false love from true. Come, come, dear Dorta; my doctor will also be there!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHAT a difference between the happy Minna von Barnhelm and the poor, tortured, despairing Charlotte ! between the struggle of high-hearted love and exalted honor with the fearful contest Charlotte must carry on with herself and the world ! Charlotte was so completely cast down, so despairing, that it seemed impossible for her to play Minna or any other role. A dark veil seemed to cloud her soul and intellect ; the violent agitation of the morning had completely exhausted her, and made her incapable of any other thought than that of her misfortunes. Mechanically she allowed herself to be dressed, and all the soothing words of her mother and sister were ineffectual to remove the shuddering horror with which anguish and despair had filled her breast. Frau Ackerman at last sought her son, and declared to him that Charlotte could not go upon the stage, that even if she commenced her role she would not be able to complete it. Schröder declared that it was too late to change the piece ; and they must commit it to its good fortune and the wonderful genius of Eckhof, who was to play Tellheim.

Just before the play commenced Charlotte desired to see Eckhof. He appeared in the full costume of the discharged major, and involuntarily held his wounded arm stiff, as if already upon the stage. With a military bearing, he asked his worshipped Minna how he could serve her, and Charlotte entreated her mother and sister to allow her to speak alone with him for a few moments. They left the room, and she turned to him, with tears in her eyes, and said :

“ You know, dear Eckhof, with what success I formerly played Francisca ; I have, however, at my brother’s request, given up that role to Madam Reinike, and to-night I play Minna for the first time.”

“ Yes, dear Lotte,” said Eckhof, with warmth, “ and this role,

which Lessing has newly written, you have seized upon and made it, as you do every thing else, a work of your genius. Believe me, Lotte, only since you have played Minna have I rightly comprehended Tellheim; so you see your former master has now become your scholar."

"You will ever remain my master, Eckhof, and that of all other German comedians," said Charlotte, greatly touched; "and yet," said she, hesitatingly, while her eye wandered restlessly over the countenance of the actor, "there is something in your Tellheim, which, the first time I played Minna, completely overcame me. To-day, when it is to be given again, I am—I confess it openly, not in a state of mind to bear it! I therefore entreat you, from love to me, to leave a few words of your part unspoken."

"God and Lessing forbid!" exclaimed the great actor, amazed at this unexpected proposition; "I would rather send a ball through my brain as Eckhof, than commit as Tellheim, such a sin against Lessing! Speak, Lotte, speak; what can there be in my role, so fatal to you? Is not this Tellheim a perfect model of a stern but noble character? Does he utter one word contrary to virtue and propriety?"

"He says something that I cannot bear—not to-night!" with every mark of anguish in soul, glance and bearing; "Eckhof, if you have only a little love for me; if my soul's peace is anything to you, I implore you to leave unsaid only a few words of your role—no, not to-night; it might be that I could not bear them!"

"What is the matter, Lotte?" said the actor, who was greatly shocked by her mournful look and her pleading tone.

"Well then—yes—I will leave the words unspoken, though it will be the first time in my life I have done this wrong to a great poet, and disobeyed theatrical laws. And above all, this classic piece! Why, Lotte, the Hamburgers know it by heart. But, from love to you, I will yield. Now, quick—name the lines that are so terrible to you. Which are they?"

Charlotte turned white, fixed her eyes upon the floor, and said—

“In the fourth act, sixth scene, Tellheim says to Minna, ‘It is an unworthy love, which hesitates to defend its object from contempt.’ You dare not speak these words to me this evening, Eckhof. With some slight changes, they have been said to me once this morning. They struck like a knife to my heart; and you, Eckhof—you would not press that knife still closer. This unhappy, much-tried heart!—oh, it has bled so long already!”

“Lotte, what is the matter with you?” said the faithful, fatherly friend. “Calm yourself, poor child,” he said, softly, as she burst into a passion of tears. “Yes, I will leave out the fatal words. But now you must collect yourself; the play will begin immediately, and you know I like to go upon the stage in cool blood. We will speak of this another time, and I will protect my Charlotte, if it is not”—added he, with a peculiar tone, and looking her sharply in the eyes—“if it has nothing to do with that man who is so hateful to me.”

And now the bell sounded, Eckhof pressed her hand kindly, jestingly threatened her with his finger, and left her alone. Minna did not appear upon the stage till the second act.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“‘MINNA VON BARNHELM, or the Soldier’s Success!’ Donnerwetter, that only was wanting! To think that the comedians should dare to degrade the noble soldiery by their pranks and buffooneries,” said old Colonel von Holbach, Ulrika’s brave uncle, as by accident a theatre bill fell into his hands.

The military title aroused his curiosity. He read the names of the characters, and his eye fell upon that of Major Tellheim, “discharged.”

“What! a major play comedy, and above all a discharged major?” murmured the old swordsman, angrily. “Could a soldier so shame his sword, cast such contempt upon his honorable position, as to pander to the amusements of a merry crowd?”

“And Paul Werner, former sergeant of the major!”

“Alle teufel! that must be a beautiful species of sergeant, this Paul Werner, who takes part in such monkey spectacles. The fellow must be in rags.”

The Colonel threw the bill angrily upon the floor, and stamped upon it, and would perhaps have given some other violent expression to his rage, if the thought had not suddenly occurred to him to see with his own eyes the shames and humiliations which these wandering comedians were about to put upon his order, and at the first “attentat” upon his honor, to rush amongst them with his gun and naked sword, and take a terrible vengeance for their insults to a pensioned major and a former sergeant.

We are acquainted with the old Colonel von Holbach, and his peculiarities, and his dislike to every species of opera or comedy. He had indeed very confused ideas as to theatres and art, and the announcement of this play excited his indignation against the stage to the highest degree. He was sufficiently embittered on his own account. An old and meritorious officer of his King, he had been wounded and neglected; and now it

was a double grievance to him, that a discharged major called Tellheim should place himself in a ridiculous position before hundreds of spectators.

In less than half an hour his plans were completed, and without making known his intentions to any member of the family, he dressed himself in full parade uniform, wrapped himself in his cavalry cloak, and entered the Opera House. He succeeded in finding a place in the first circle of the parterre, and not without much difficulty did he force himself through the crowd, and he was received with some expressions of discontent. Many gaped anxiously at the strange and weather-beaten form, whose face was almost concealed by his immense cloak-collar. Here and there were audible murmurs, and many laughed, but the old soldier was not at all concerned by their surprise or angry glances. He took his seat with unshaken coolness, and a little old man with a hunchback asked him, with ironical politeness, if he would not prefer taking a seat on his lap, a kind of growl was heard in response, which sounded like "Gradaus!"

Soon the curtain rose, and *Minna von Barnhelm*, a play which marked an epoch on the German stage, and which was followed by countless imitations, commenced.

Snarling and growling, and in spite of his limited space, moving nervously backwards and forwards on his seat, to the great indignation of his neighbors, our theatrical enemy, Captain von Capernaum, manifested but a displeased interest in the first scenes between Just and the host, and interrupted the dialogue every moment by some dissatisfied marginal notes. The Hush! of his next neighbor did not affect him in the least. When Eckhof appeared on the stage as the pensioned Major Tellheim, and was received by the house with thundering applause, the old Colonel commenced to follow the representations with the most profound attention, and to express his views unhesitatingly from time to time.

The acting Major was so soldierly, so perfectly respectable, that you saw at the first glance, he was more at home upon the battle-field in the wild conflict, than in the anteroom of minis-

ters and courtiers; his soldierly bearing, his dignified composure, every movement made known the brave chief of battalion, tried, trusted, both in peace and war, every inch of him valor and manly honor; and the old Danish Colonel the longer he looked the German Major in the face felt warmer about the heart; in spirit he lived over again his former warlike past, and it seemed to him, from time to time, as if he had met Major Tellheim in earlier days, and been greatly attracted by the honorable and brave gentleman.

But if the impression produced by his first appearance was so favorable, how much more must Tellheim's history, his misfortunes, his undeserved slights, and his present painful and neglected condition have excited the profoundest sympathy in the heart of the old Colonel. He had experienced all this in himself; he had been disdained and kept down, and to this hour had received no satisfaction; wicked slanderers and low intriguers had triumphed over him, and the old and meritorious officer was at last discharged, even as Tellheim had been. Holbach interwove, unknown to himself, all these sad pictures and remembrances of his own life so completely with those of the actor Tellheim, that he could scarcely distinguish one fate from the other.

In the development of Tellheim's love affair with the beautiful Fraulein von Barnhelm, he was reminded, more and more, of his own early days. The imagination of the good Colonel once awakened, he confounded this Minna with the object of his first youthful love, and a thousand happy living remembrances were aroused in his softened heart.

He also had once loved and been beloved again, even as Tellheim; and if another fate than that of Tellheim and Minna had robbed him of his beloved bride, that was only an incident—love was at last the principal point with both.

Charlotte's appearance as Minna von Barnhelm, in the second act, completed the happy delusions of the old soldier's heart; her charming manner, her magic grace, her touching sensibility, made him forget wholly that he was only a spectator and not an

actor in the scene; that Tellheim, and not himself, was Minna's lover. His excitement increased as Tellheim continued to play the prudish and unbending lover towards this glorious creature. Soon Uncle Anton was compelled to relieve his full heart by broken sentences, interrupting, every moment, the dialogue of the two lovers; and drew upon himself anew the attention of all those who were near him.

His neighbor to the right, the little old man with the hunch-back, to whom we have before alluded, and who was no other than our well-known intellectual poet and critic, Dr. Dreyer, commenced now to pay more attention to the words which the foolish man was whispering in his ears, than to the play and the performers. He became convinced that the old soldier's brain was not exactly in good working order, and this novel kind of double spectacle, in the parterre and on the stage, in which the spectator took part in the piece, delighted Dreyer immensely; and he listened with increasing curiosity and interest to the old soldier's queer additions to Lessing's text; his remarks and exclamations were filled with piquant and pithy ideas. When Tellheim refused positively to accept the fraulein's hand, his old comrade in war was ready to take her part. When the host was about to dismiss the discharged officer from his hotel, Uncle Anton called him a stingy old scoundrel and a felon. The merry Francesca he dignified with the honorable title of "Blitzmadel;" and to the ever-worthy Sergeant Paul Werner, who remained so faithful to his poor Major, he called out constantly, "Bravo, comrade!" in such loud and unrestrained tones, that the grumbling of the public was several times heard.

The enthusiasm of the old Colonel increased from scene to scene, from act to act. In the warm sympathy with which the fate of the characters inspired him, he forgot that this was a theatre and all this was illusion; under the masterly acting of Eckhof, the brave Tellheim appeared to him more and more the perfect ideal of a soldier and a nobleman. In that scene where Tellheim's insulted honor received satisfaction at last through the gracious letter of the King, a scene which Eckhof's con-

temporaries declared unanimously to be his master-piece, Uncle Anton could no longer control himself; he wept like a child; and in an uncontrollable outburst of violent emotion, he cried out: "Vive le roi! vivent tous les braves soldats!"

The public found in this expression an outlet for their own violent enthusiasm; they forgot the clapping and bravos of ordinary applause, and shouted as with one voice, through the whole parterre, "Vive le roi! vivent tous les braves soldats!" This rare applause silenced the voices of those who declared that an officer could not be the hero of a drama, because he was bound in the iron chain of subordination.

"A beautiful, a glorious drama, is it not, Herr neighbor?" whispered Dr. Dreyer in the Colonel's ear as the curtain fell. The old soldier stared at him fixedly, and wiped the tears from his eyes, then seized the hand of the questioner, and pressed it heartily, exclaiming, as if awaking from a happy dream, "Tell me the name of the author; gradaus! he is a nobleman; I must know him and testify my respect; gradaus! sir, what is he called?"

"Hush! it is no other than our very worthy Pastor, Johann Melchior Götze," whispered the merry wag; "but in Heaven's name tell no one, for our very worthy Senior is a stern Christian gentleman, and writes these things only in secret, behind the backs, as it were, of his grave colleagues."

"Where does he live?" said the Colonel, hastily.

"Near the Catharine Church," said Dreyer in the same mysterious tone, and then succeeded in releasing himself from his amusing companion.

Filled with the impressions of what he had seen and heard, the old man returned home, reconciled entirely to the hated stage. He had expected nothing but harlequin sports and frivolities, and he had found the gravity and truth of life, virtue, grace, manners, morals—human nature in its noblest form, and all clothed in a language so pure, so exalted that his innermost thought, the profoundest accord of his soul was touched. His own hard fate seemed embodied before him; he

understood all; he submitted to all, only one thing seemed incomprehensible—why Pastor Götze, the author of the drama, published this glorious piece *secretly* ?

“ A Pastor, thought the old soldier, who knew men, and above all, soldiers, so by heart as the writer of *Minna von Barnhelm* evidently does, must bear a brave heart under his cowl, and should know that he could not do much more good with his best sermon than with this play.”

This being the Colonel's hearty opinion, he resolved to visit the worthy Pastor on the following morning, after the sermon, and tell him that he should be brave, and continue to hold up to an appreciating public the honor and reputation of valiant soldiers.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HERR JOHANN MELCHIOR GOTZE, celebrated theologian and Pastor of St. Catherine Church, Senior and member of the Ministry of Hamburg, embodied the stern spiritual scholarship of his century in stately embonpoint. This same Johann Melchior Götze was, as we have stated, a zealous adversary of the theatre. Almost every Sunday he thundered forth against this heathenish amusement, and compared Hamburg to Sodom and Gomorrah. He declared the stage to be a school of Satan, and in which nothing but immorality and infidelity were taught.

On this Sabbath morning Pastor Götze was well satisfied with the result of his sermon, and had returned to his parsonage to rest after the physical and intellectual strain of the exercises. He was a rhetorician and not without talent, was inexorable in his judgment against all freethinking in Church and State, and often original in his conclusions. To-day, for example, in his sermon against the comedians, he declared that God only delayed his condemnation of this house of Sardanapalus, because, at the last judgment when he would have much to do to separate the white and black sheep, he would simply have to ask every soul if during their lives they had attended the theatre and taken pleasure therein?

Full of agreeable and comforting reflections, the Pastor rested in his arm-chair, while his housekeeper was busily occupied in the kitchen preparing his Sunday dinner, when suddenly he heard a strange manly voice inquiring for him, and the cook replied, that the most worthy Senior received no visits between the close of the morning service and his dinner. The stranger must therefore return at a more convenient season; now he could not even be announced. To this he replied in an almost supplicating tone, refused to withdraw, and drew near the door as if to force an entrance. Then the worthy

Senior arose and opened the door himself, half angry and half curious to see this importunate visitor.

A stiff, thin figure, with weather-beaten features and gray beard, and a black plaster over one eye, stood before him. He waved his hand as a silent invitation to enter, and the stranger crossed the threshold with large strides, made a stiff and solemn scrape of the foot, then drew up in a stately military position, just as he had seen Sergeant Werner do upon the stage the evening before, and said, in his rough jargon,—

“Votre serviteur, Herr Pastor, gradaus is my speech; gradaus! I speak from my heart. I have come to speak with the noble man, face to face, to know him who through his glorious work has inspired me with such respect.

“My name is Colonel von Holbach—pensioned—hard case—degraded, I would say—Copenhagen—first Royal Garde Regiment of Foot. Had fifty-five years of service—often wounded—made many campaigns. The devil knows, Herr Pastor, how it goes with old soldiers in times of peace—want condolence from no man. You are a true man—you softened my heart—made me weep like a child; have forgiven all my enemies—am proud of my discharge, and all this through you, Herr Pastor—on my honor, all through you.”

The worthy Senior did not comprehend more than half that the old soldier said; but he knew that he had come to manifest his respect. Pastor Götze, therefore, accepted the flattering compliment the old soldier paid to his “glorious work” as a sincere applause for his morning sermon. He was convinced that the Danish officer had been one of his audience, and he answered, with unction, “God be thanked, you are most heartily welcome, my honored Colonel. The adversaries of God and the powers of this world are bound together, and setting at naught all divine authority.”

These words from the lips of a writer of comedies sounded rather strangely to the old Colonel, and yet he did not doubt that the author of *Minna von Barnhelm* stood before him, and he said, with much emphasis, “Gradaus! Herr Pastor, I don’t

at all understand what you have just said, and think it of but little consequence. I am a good Christian and a brave soldier, gradaus ! I would rather see you an honorable soldier, as, for example, Tellheim, than so taken up with Bible and Catechism. You Scripture scholars are so filled with the fear of God that you do not know how to show true courage with men. But that is nothing. Priest or soldier, you are a nobleman, and you know how to make it clear to the people what an old officer suffers when he is mocked at court, and mercilessly deprived of his rights. Give me your hand. Herr Pastor, you are the first pulpit-man who has inspired me with respect. I would like to see another, who in pithy speech, soldierly sentiment, and merry humor, resembles you."

The Senior took this compliment as he had done the former ones, for an acknowledgment, in rough, soldier speech, of his morning sermon, though he saw plainly that his new convert had no profound understanding of the Bible and revealed religion. He expressed this opinion so plainly and earnestly to the Colonel, that the latter seemed to lose courage, and could not understand how the talented and merry writer of *Minna von Barnhelm* should entertain an old soldier with the old church fathers, and speak so mournfully of the sins of the world and the grieving of the Spirit.

At last he lost his patience entirely, and to put an end to the supposed dissimulation of the good but timid author of comedies, he exclaimed, half humorously, half indignantly :

"On my honor, Herr Pastor, you are, in spite of your cowl and Lutheranism, a good fellow, and I understand now why the Christian ministry watch you so sharply."

"How ! Herr Colonel," stammered Pastor Götze, more surprised than exasperated. "The Christian ministry ! I am a member of it, and, indeed, Senior—Without doubt, however, have I among my brothers many secret enemies and opponents, but"—

"You cannot answer to your holy brethren for your comedies," said the old swordsman, laughingly interrupting him, and

giving him a little tap, in an unembarrassed good-fellowish sort of way, upon his wig, till the powder surrounded them in every direction.

The Senior now began to fear that the old soldier's brain was affected, and rather anxiously he drew towards the door, so that in case of necessity he might take refuge in the kitchen. With assumed friendliness he said to the Colonel, "Yes, you are perfectly right, my honored Herr Baron; with comedians we can, of course, have nothing to do! May the Lord protect every good Christian from such sinful associations."

And now the Colonel became enraged; he sprang scornfully from his chair, and exclaimed, with violent gesticulations, "Sinful associations! Gradaus! Herr Pastor, now I am as little pleased with you as I was with the cunning host who deceived and lied against the honorable Tellheim. What earthly necessity is there for you to dissemble longer before me? Above all, why do you deny your glorious comedy? I, an old and honored officer, tell you, that there is more wisdom, more valor, and more Christianity in your 'Minna von Barnhelm' than in a hundred sermons. Tellheim is the model of a brave major; Paul Werner is a jewel of a sergeant; and with a dozen such soldiers as Just, I would drive the Swedes out of the world. The whole Hamburg ministry is not worth as much as that lance-bearer. Gradaus! you are the author of the 'Soldier's Good Fortune,' which was given yesterday at the opera house, and I know that you keep this thing a secret, out of respect to the piety of some good people; but you have written it to the honor and glory of all pensioned officers."

"What!" cried Pastor Götze, with flashing eyes, and raising his fist threateningly towards the man who dared to speak to him in such a heathenish style. "I the writer of a comedy! I a frivolous blasphemer, an atheist! I a man of wit! Recall that, sir, upon the spot, or—ha! ha! that only was wanting—that I should be confounded with so shameful a creature as this Lessing! Recall it upon the spot, sir." And here he advanced resolutely, with all the imposing dignity of an insulted priest,

before the astonished Colonel. "You have insulted me in my own house, in a three-fold capacity, as pastor, theologian, and senior; have held me up to the laughter and mockery of apostates. You force yourself uncalled into my peaceful dwelling, interrupt me in my meditations, and believe that you can blaspheme against me and go unpunished! But you shall know the contrary. I will complain to the magistrate on the spot; this shall cost you dear!"

This speech, the zealous rage of Pastor Götze, whose whole body was trembling, and who was striding like a madman about the room, at last opened the eyes of the good Captain von Capernaum to his unfortunate mistake, and the certainty that the little old man in the parterre had mystified him, pierced his soul like a flash of lightning. He recognised too late the error into which his credulity and enthusiasm for the author of *Minna von Barnhelm* had betrayed him, and this thought brought this old man, so sensitive in regard to all that related to his personal honor, into a greater rage than that of the severe senior at being confounded with the atheistical Lessing.

"Base! infamous!" was all that Uncle Anton could utter, so violent was his rage against the unknown author of his mistake. At last he controlled himself sufficiently to explain to the furious Pastor, who at first refused to listen to him; his personal vanity was as deeply wounded as his apostolic dignity; he at last became convinced that the kind old warrior had been mystified by some malicious man, and in his ignorance of the theological and literary personages of Hamburg, he had fallen artlessly into the snare.

But even when this exasperating mistake was cleared up, and pastor and soldier were willing to be reconciled, the bitterness of both against the author of this mischief was extreme; and Pastor Götze avowed that the scoundrel was certainly a Socinian; this was the name of reproach which he applied to all his theological adversaries.

The good Colonel felt the floor burning under his feet. This unhappy result to his first debut, as a dramatical enthusiast, left

him nothing to do but to commend himself as politely as possible, to the worthy Pastor, and withdraw; so, trembling with rage and shame, they separated. The Colonel resolved in his heart, cost what it would, to punish his enemy for the wicked jest he had played off upon an old officer and nobleman.

We have no farther information as to Pastor Götze, in relation to this affair; fearing the wit and satire of his enemies, he perhaps chose the wiser part, and kept his own counsel.

The remembrance of this unfortunate morning visit gnawed like a worm at the heart of the Colonel, and robbed him of his cheerfulness. In vain did Ulrika and the good Frances seek to allay his melancholy and feverish restlessness; he preserved a gloomy silence, and had the aspect of a man who was concocting some terrible plan, day and night; and consecrated every thought to that object. He left the house regularly every morning at an early hour, and paced the great city with unwearied zeal; no hotel, no promenade, no public place, was unvisited. With his one restless, rolling eye, he examined the crowd assembled, and then hastened off to another place of resort. He seemed like Peter Schlemihl seeking his lost shadow. He stood for hours, before the beginning of the opera, watching all who entered. At dinner-time, he entered the hotels, and walked gravely and slowly through the dining-rooms, fixing his eye upon every guest. His stern inquisitorial mien, his military bearing, aroused the most curious conjectures. Some held him for the secret spy of a foreign government. The imaginations of the Hamburgers exhausted themselves over this mysterious stranger with the black plaster over his eye; while the innocent and simple-minded Colonel was only seeking for the wicked man who had played off this jest upon him.

Colonel Holbach sought, during a whole week in vain, for his unknown neighbor of the parterre.

At last, after eight days of search, he entered the well-known wine-shop Obergesellschaft, the common resort of all scholars, artists, and young men, which our good Doctor Dreyer had for many years visited daily. His established principle was that the

more you owe your host the more constantly you should visit him.

Many guests were present; the tables on both sides of the wine-room were filled.

The merry theatrical troupe and their special friends were seated at the table in the background. Schröder was present, near an old gentleman with a remarkably mild countenance, who, smiling quietly, gazed, with sparkling eyes, at the artist's table, and seemed as young and gay in spirit as the merriest amongst them.

This was Klopstock, the Messiah singer; he came but rarely to the wine-shop, but was received with shouts of enthusiasm. He was the avowed patron of Schröder's theatre and its talented company, and they looked upon him as the embodied genius of poetry and art. Was he not the greatest German writer of his time? Just at this time appeared, at the close of his Messiah, his glorious ode and his most touching hymn, "Auferstehn, ja auferstehn,"* which was sung almost every Sunday in the Protestant churches.

Doctor Dreyer had seated himself, with a few friends, at a card table to play *hombre*, just as the long, stiff, one-eyed Colonel von Holbach entered the room, and attracted many eyes towards him.

Wrapped in his field-cloak, he walked gravely through the room, observing carefully every countenance, right and left, at the table. Suddenly his eye fell upon Dreyer, and he stood rooted to the spot; at last he had found his enemy, the little man with the humpback and the cunning roguish face.

Completely occupied with his play, Dreyer saw and heard nothing that was going on around him; when suddenly he received so powerful a blow in the back that he lost both sight and hearing. When able to rise from his chair, he recognised, at the first glance, his old neighbor of the parterre. His amazed and angry countenance cleared in a moment. He looked at the

* The Resurrection.

Colonel from head to foot, and then said, in the most kindly and familiar tone :

“ Ah ! you come direct from Pastor Götze, no doubt, sir ? ”

The waggish unembarrassed tone, the ironical smile, with which this question was asked, was the signal for a roar of laughter ; which, of course, aroused the unknown adversary of the Doctor to increased rage. The Doctor's friends gathered around him to protect him from further attack.

Dreyer gave a hurried account of the untimely jest he had lately played off upon the old Colonel. The assembly was much more disposed to mirth than gravity, but the military and noble bearing of the old soldier inspired consideration and respect, and they confessed that he had a right to his revenge. Eckhof and Schröder received him into their circle, and Klopstock, who had known him in Copenhagen, spoke soft words of peace and reconciliation. He presented Eckhof as the admirable representative of Tellheim, and Schröder as the Sergeant Paul Werner. The old soldier embraced them both warmly ; and in a few moments called them his old comrades in war. He accepted the acquaintance of the valiant Tellheim and his brave sergeant as a full compensation for the malicious jest of Dreyer, became more and more merry, and seemed willing to be reconciled when Doctor Dreyer confessed his fault frankly and begged for pardon, declaring he had richly deserved the hard lesson he had received.

The Colonel gave him his hand, but swore never again to trust to a writer either good or bad. To complete his joy Schröder promised him that Minna von Barnhelm should soon again be brought upon the stage.

So ended the tragic adventure of Doctor Dreyer with the Danish Colonel.

In the next number of the weekly paper he informed the public of Hamburg, without further commentary, that he had now received the most striking evidence that Lessing, and no other, was the author of the comedy, *Minna von Barnhelm*.

CHAPTER XL.

THE violent scene Charlotte had just passed through with her family produced one good result—they urged and pressed her no further; on the contrary, avoided everything which could increase her melancholy or excite her nervous system. She was treated with the mildest forbearance; no word of allusion was made to the old unhappy story. They gave her no reason to believe that they suspected her or believed it possible that she could continue her intercourse with this man after the revelations that had been made to her.

“If,” said Schröder, “she is saved, let it be through her own heart, and with a full knowledge of her guilt to herself, to her genius, and her family; and that this conviction may be more complete let us leave her feelings full play, and not provoke and embarrass her by new suspicions. Charlotte has reached that point where she must save herself or be lost. Let us then make her return to the old paths as easy as possible. As for Baron Sylberg, I will keep my eye upon him.”

Schröder, in fact, had arranged his plans so well that Sylberg, who was also excluded from the house of Frau Unzer, was in absolute uncertainty as to whether Charlotte had not freely liberated herself from him. He could not doubt but that his whole past life, particularly his affair with Bertha, was known to her and to her family. This conviction, in a man of his passionate temperament, filled him with a burning desire of revenge.

The loss of Charlotte was not so painful to him as his rage at Fanny’s treachery; his vanity was greatly wounded; he had been secure of victory. He remembered too late the warning of his friend T. His evil genius had triumphed this time, even as in the case of the noble Ulrika; but in that affair the grave had covered up the larger part of his treachery; but now two

of the most distinguished families of Hamburg had closed their doors against him.

Sylberg's blood boiled with rage and impotent fury when he thought of Madam Fanny's disclosures, and in his blind passion he regretted that he had not sent Olaf to cut her throat before it was too late.

All that remained for him was to withdraw quietly from Hamburg, and seclude himself in his garrison. He thought his game lost; day by day went by and he had no news from Charlotte.

In vain was Olaf on the watch from morning till night; in vain did the Baron himself creep quietly around the house in the twilight; neither was Charlotte to be seen in the theatre. For eight days her name did not appear upon the bills.

Was she ill? Was she forcibly separated from him by her family? Or had she herself resolved to break off all intercourse with him?

Neither of these suppositions was correct. The poor girl was in the same helpless condition with himself; she had neither the courage to continue her engagement, nor the strength to relinquish her love.

Charlotte lived in these days of agonizing doubt in a half awake dream, and even the contest with the world, so inimical to her love, was less violent than the struggle in her own heart, and her fearful uncertainty about Sylberg and his true character.

The veil which had been drawn back from his past life—was not that also a phantom, like the veil of the great Grecian painter, to shake her faith in her beloved? An icy shudder pervaded her frame whenever she thought of the Baron, and of her mother's, brother's, sister's, and Madam Unzer's opinion of him.

Was she deceived in him or in herself, when she compared his noble image with the portrait drawn of him by her family? Had God struck her with blindness, so that she could not see the black traitor's soul behind his dazzling exterior? Had he, indeed abused her youth, her innocence, her confiding love, her

glorious faith in him with such base inconstancy? Had he ensnared her by wicked magic? For now, even now, when the lightest thought of him sent a death-shudder through her heart, she knew that one single dear word from his lips, one glance of his soul-beaming eyes, would draw her back, and inspire the joyful conviction that such love could not be false, and that in spite of all the past, he was and would ever be the idol of her soul.

It was, indeed, a wicked sorcery which held her soul enchained. But not only Sylberg, but her own romantic heart, enticed her young life deeper and deeper into his dark plans.

At last she believed she had found the thread which would lead her happily out of this terrible labyrinth of doubt against her beloved, or hold her firmly, irrevocably, with her life's peace destroyed, in this dark, mysterious maze, called the world.

The thought came to her as by inspiration, and she resolved at once to visit the mother of that Bertha whose pale image had been held up to her as an evidence of Sylberg's unworthy and immoral character. Bertha's mother lived at Brookthorswall, and was named Gades. Charlotte would go and demand the name of him who had betrayed her daughter.

Was Sylberg really this traitor? Then, yes, then, if this was confirmed, she would believe he had been preparing the same dark fate for her, the branch of rosemary for her neglected grave.

"Merciful God, let this cup pass from me!" murmured Charlotte, and with trembling heart she counted the hours to twilight.

She left the house under the pretext of visiting her old friend Frau Unzer, and thanked God that he had sent darkness upon the earth. This night the question of her life's peace was to be decided! She hoped, in this obscurity, to reach the strange and distant part of the city without observation. Perhaps not three times in her life had she entered this quarter of Hamburg. It lay upon the harbor, and was inhabited by shipmasters and sailors; was a degraded locality, and avoided gene-

rally by respectable people. The sailors could not be jested with by daylight, and in the night they were more quarrelsome and unbridled.

Charlotte dared to tread this dangerous path alone, and at night, in an unknown realm, to seek the old fruitseller ; and notwithstanding her fame as the first tragic actress of Hamburg, and indeed of Germany, to descend into a dark, damp cellar, and have the question of her life's happiness decided by an old and ignorant woman.

No wonder that reflections over her former life and artistic celebrity, and the present painful condition into which her love had betrayed her, occupied her fully, and she realized how much of suffering and sorrow had been mingled with her fate during the short time she had known Sylberg, and how much poorer she now was in all youth's beautiful charms than she had been before this ill-starred engagement.

Now, in the rude dark March night, resembling some houseless outcast, she was hurrying through the streets to seek information of strangers in the lowest rank, as to the character and past life of him she desired to have as her companion for life.

These thoughts weighed heavily upon her soul, and yet she felt that she was far from the goal—that heavier trials lay still before her which would result in a fearful awakening from all her rich and glorious dreams.

Charlotte had passed the fish-market and was about to enter the "New Burg." She heard her name pronounced in hollow, suppressed tones, by a man's voice, and in the next moment Sylberg stood before her. She was speechless from surprise and terror, and nearly fell insensible upon the pavement. The Baron threw his arm around her trembling form, and said in half tender, half reproachful tones :

"My sweet Lotte seems terrified at my sudden appearance ; and yet I find you here in the most natural way in the world. I saw you leave your house and followed you unnoticed ; did not dare, however, to speak to you till you entered this empty street. Now, then, where are you bound, my loved one, if I may dare to

ask? I confess that both time and weather are unsuited to this distant and lonely promenade. Perhaps you knew me even in the darkness, and have thus led me on from street to street."

Charlotte hung as if crushed, upon his arm, and could only utter a few disconnected words.

His unexpected appearance had made her forget for a moment her own purpose, and now this meeting unnerved her completely.

"Take me home, Max, you shall know all," whispered she, trembling. "This is the most grievous step I have ever taken in my life, and I know that without having reached the goal, I am the most wretched creature upon God's earth."

At these words she wept convulsively, and Sylberg exhausted his eloquence in vain in seeking to compose her. Completely overcome by pain and terror, she could only answer him by sobs and sighs; but she allowed him to hold her hand, and from time to time to press her passionately to his heart, while she walked in silence by her side.

All that the Baron said to her, his assurances, his complaints against her family, his allusions to Fanny's treachery, all this she knew was no justification, no proof of his innocence. He had concealed much from her which only an accident had brought to light. His conduct would have aroused the suspicions of the most trusting heart.

This sorrowful conclusion at last gave Charlotte the strength to answer him. She was resolved to know, even if it cost her life, how he would defend himself from the heavy charges brought against him. Her voice was almost lost as she asked him if he had known Fanny before they met there, and if he had known and deceived an innocent girl by the name of Bertha Gades?

Scarcely had she pronounced this name than she felt the Baron tremble, and he stood still, as if rooted to the earth. His head was bowed upon his breast, and his eyes fixed, staring before him; a deadly pallor covered his face, and gave it such an expression of anguish that her innermost soul shuddered.

But in the next moment Sylberg was master of himself; he raised his head calmly, looked her firmly in the eye, and said in a tone of painful emotion, "And is this all which has separated my sweet Charlotte from me for a week long? Only lately you reproached me with not knowing your heart, because one day—only one single day—I was anxious and full of care and doubt, and one word from you calmed my fears."

He paused, shook his head thoughtfully, and murmured some indistinct words. He seemed not yet resolved what he would say. A dark cloud overshadowed his features. It was evident that conflicting feelings were struggling in his breast, and now his better nature seemed to triumph, and he exclaimed frankly, spontaneously—

"Well, yes, then—in God's name, yes! The girl was lovely, and loved me. At that time, outward beauty was the only quality I held valuable in woman; but I swear to you, Lotte, Fanny had nothing to do with this. Later, she gave her a refuge from her mother's scorn, and—and, oh Lotte! how heavily did my heart repent! The poor girl believed the oaths of a Baron, built upon them, and—"

"You abandoned her!" said Charlotte, cold as ice even to her heart. She knew not if she was waking or dreaming, so confused and amazed was she by this frank confession.

"No, I did not abandon her—only I did not return," said the Baron, in whispered tones. Then, after a short pause, he added, with emphasis—

"When I returned, she was dead, and the city of Hamburg was ringing with your adventure at Kugelsort. This excited my curiosity to see you, and your first glance decided my fate. I can truly say that unhappy history induced me to love you."

"And yet you never said a word of this sad story to me," said Charlotte, indignantly; "never troubled yourself about the fate of your child. I call that pitiless, hard-hearted, without example."

"And yet I deserve this reproach least of all," said the Major, calmly. "It was not best to call back poor Bertha's

shadow. As to the child, in spite of my unwearied zeal, I could not discover the slightest trace of it."

"What do you say?" said Charlotte, seized with a sudden impulse to affect surprise—in reality, however, greatly rejoiced at an opportunity to put the Baron to the proof. "What do you say, Max? You knew nothing of the child, and yet I know almost certainly that you stole away the poor little being before I had time to remove it! Do not deny it. You alone, Max, know what became of the child; you and no other man had an interest in its disappearance."

Was it the natural tone in which she uttered this pretended rebuke, or was it Sylberg's guilty conscience, which made him speechless at this unexpected charge, which laid a burden upon his soul, of which for once his conscience acquitted him? Appearances were greatly against him. He declared, however, most solemnly, that he knew nothing of the child but what Fanny had told him.

"Believe me, Lotte, if I had found the child, my crime would have been made known to you, and I should have hoped to find in you a second mother for the poor orphan. I ask you again, dear Charlotte, for what purpose should Bertha's pale shadow have been called up into the clear sunshine which your love had thrown over the dark grief and repentance of my soul?"

Charlotte breathed more freely, and an earnest "God be praised!" resounded in her heart for her recovered faith in her beloved.

In order, however, to dismiss the last dark doubt from her soul as to his past life, and to convince herself perfectly of his sincere repentance, she suppressed her feelings of joy at his confession, and said in low tones—

"Ah! dear Max, you little knew my despair when I first heard Bertha's story, and knew that the man to whom I had given my heart was faithless! But even this grief was nothing in comparison to the horror I felt at the explanation I received as to the Countess Linden kron and her dead husband. In this affair you can scarcely protest your innocence. I know, as-

surely, that the Countess is an admirable, virtuous, and accomplished lady; one of those noble beings whom no man can slander and go unpunished."

If the Baron had been agitated by the mention of Bertha's name, this sudden allusion to Ulrika was like a destroying sword in his soul. He felt that the long-feared and eventful moment was at hand, in which all his treachery would be made public. He could do nothing, for Charlotte's good angel, unknown to herself, had put just so many words upon her lips as were necessary to convince him that he had been completely unmasked even in the affair with Ulrika. He became speechless with terror, and they had almost reached Charlotte's home before he could control himself—then he exclaimed in bitter scorn—

"If the Countess Lindenkron is the oracle who has instructed you as to my past life, then, in your eyes, I am capable of every villany, and my passport is written. Go on then, question your oracle as to who I am, and how it came that you have been for so long a time deceived in me.

"But I tell you, Lotte, so certain as I once held you high-hearted and independent enough to oppose this pitiful world with its cunning and its wickedness, with the same consecration of feeling which you have dedicated to your art, so certain do I now tear apart those bonds which I once thought bound me to you for time and for eternity. Go and play Rutland, and Emilia Galotti, and Marie Beaumarchais, as grandly as before; but never again will I believe in the value and truth of your art. You have offered up a great and glorious love to the most pitiful considerations. You have more faith in a cunning slanderer than in the voice of your own heart. You can never be a great actress, and were never capable of a great love!"

"For God's sake! Max, have pity upon me!" she stammered, more dead than alive; "I am willing to believe that the Countess—

"Believe what you will!" said the heartless scoundrel, in affected despair; "but do not ask of me to trust you further!"

Go to the Countess Lindenkron ! even you can learn from her how vice can make a comedy of holy things."

With a burst of mocking laughter he tore himself violently loose from Charlotte, who clasped him convulsively ; hurled back vehemently her extended and pleading arms, and, before she could speak one word of extenuation, he disappeared, uttering the most frightful curses.

The young actress advanced a few steps to pursue him, hoping to be reconciled, but her strength failed her—seized with a sudden vertigo she fell back against the church wall.

At this moment a dark manly form advanced from the other side of the street towards her.

This was Schröder, who had been an invisible witness of this whole affecting scene, and he came forward at the right moment to receive his insensible sister in his arms, and bear her to her mother.

At home they succeeded in arousing her to consciousness, but with the return of reason came also the remembrance of what she had endured, and with it the certainty that Sylberg had forsaken her for ever !

"He is gone ! I have driven him from me !" she exclaimed, in the most heart-breaking tones ; and wringing her hands despairingly. She would listen to no comfort, no admonition ; her excitable temperament gave to the long-suppressed grief of her soul a wild fanatical expression ; and she sunk to the floor in convulsions. Screaming and struggling with her brother and sister who strove to lay her on the bed, with unnatural strength she endeavored to escape from them, and rush after her lover. At last Unzer appeared and applied the lancet. Towards morning there was outward insensibility, and then the symptoms of a raging fever followed.

CHAPTER LXI.

FOR several days Charlotte hovered between life and death. She had some intervals of consciousness, but these moments were perhaps more terrible to the family than to herself—then, alas ! the malady of an incurably wounded heart took the place of wild and frantic fever, and in every touching form of lamentation the true, but disdained love, wailed and lamented the lost lover ; called him by the most endearing names, and thus betrayed to her astonished and agitated family the power of a genius whose pure but tempestuous passions could not long resist the deceptions and misery of this earthly life.

Her youth at last triumphed over her malady, and she was restored to health, at least outwardly, sooner than could have been hoped.

But the blossom was crushed, and those who saw the young artist at this time shuddered at the change.

The soul-beaming glance of her eye, the smile which illumined her countenance, and like a clear mirror expressed every emotion of her heart, speaking eloquently even in the calm and quiet moments of her tender sensibilities, all had flown ! In place of this a shadowy gravity rested on her countenance.

The eyes, so lately sparkling with enthusiasm, were clouded with melancholy, giving sometimes a timid, convulsed glance, when a thoughtless word from strange lips, or some unguarded thought of her own breast, awakened the anguish of the soul from its dumb sorrow.

This noble, ardent artist heart still loved the faithless author of her misfortunes, purely, warmly ; and in every pulse of her being she felt convinced that she, and she alone, had wantonly destroyed the happiness of her love, and that she must do a fearful penance for her want of faith in her lover's constancy and honor. Before her vehement accusations against her own heart the last doubt as to Sylberg's manly worth had vanished

She was convinced that no other consideration than that of wounded honor had induced him to forsake her.

She now no longer reproached him with inexorable pride and cruel coldness, though he had fiercely accused her of both.

Even these accusations from his lips possessed a powerful charm for her. The thought of being disdained and abandoned by him, engraved his image more deeply in her soul; and his cold, proud cruelty made him more attractive in her eyes, than his former glowing devotion. To win back the inconstant falcon which had flown far away from her, or to sink into the abyss of nothingness before his eyes, was now the only anchor of her life's hopes.

We describe now the last decisive point in Charlotte's life; we will give some extracts from her letters, and then resume her story. Besides the psychological interest it inspires, there remains a biography which deserves our attention.

Charlotte writes thus to her friend :

"How shall I describe my grief to you? I have seen the Baron, but some wicked demon had assumed his form to deceive me. He rode yesterday by my carriage, but alas! the faithless one gave me not one glance! he turned away his face from me! I had to summon all my strength not to fall insensible. My only comfort was the hope that I had been deceived; that it was not him. To-day, however, I have learned that he is surely here. Ah! how much bitter sorrow must my poor heart expose to you? Stand by me, dear friend, in my grief and perplexity, or I shall sink under them!"

"Perhaps I will receive a letter from him. If he reproaches me, I believe I shall die of grief! or has he really forsaken me? And I love him with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength! he will never find a girl who loves him as passionately as his poor Charlotte, and yet how cruel he is to me! In time to come he will know what a heart he has lost! Lost! ah! he will never lose it. This poor anguish-stricken heart is conse-

crated to him—will beat eternally for him! Oh! if he were not so unjust to me!”

“Just Heaven! I am in the wildest despair! I am scarcely conscious of my existence! I am too fearfully tortured—I can endure it no longer! What have I become? My mother, my once tender mother, is cruel to me. A stranger has written her a letter—what has the unworthy slanderer written? No! no! it is not to be borne!

“You see my boundless agony, Sophie. Oh! you whom I love—whom I will ever love—could you know my torments! But no! no! your heart would bleed!

“Sophie, my anguish has no limit! The Baron has sworn my destruction! I have endeavored to banish his image for ever from my soul, but in vain—in vain! it returns fearlessly, and fills me with horrors!

“I fear his love—but his coldness kills me! He seeks to manifest his indifference in every possible way; when I see him by accident, he drives new arrows into my wounded heart.

“I can tell you all in the words of Maria, in *Clavigo*:

“‘Yesterday when we met him, his glance inspired me with full warm love; and then I returned home and thought over his conduct; the calm, cold look he fixed upon me, as he walked by the side of the beautiful woman he led by the arm.’

“Then I was a Spaniard in my heart—I grasped after my dagger! I seized poison! I disguised myself! Are you amazed, Sophie? All this was but in thought; of course, only that!

“My imagination led me to follow him. I saw him at the feet of his new love, lavishing all his tenderness, all his charming humility upon her; all those vows with which he had so often deceived me! I took aim at the heart of the traitor! Sophie, the only friend from whom I hope for pity, assuage my torment, or I will plunge a dagger into my heart!”

“You want news of me? What can I say to you, my good

Sophie? My heart shivers and freezes under the tortures of raging jealousy!

"Alas! I know I am no longer loved! But I cannot endure the woman who has enchained this cruel one! He was at the theatre yesterday, gay and unembarrassed; it cost me many tears!

"He has made the acquaintance of a lady who sits in the fourth loge. He would not look on me. I have wept so much, so much!"

"I am indeed desperate! My mother is enraged against me! She will no longer see me, and perhaps I will be sent far, far away!

"I am so wretched I am almost afraid to open my heart to you. This poor tortured heart was made for love, it is worthy of friendship, it deserved a better fate!

"Never was a purer love than mine. Blacker treachery was never perpetrated! He loves another.

"Sophie, only think of it! With him I have lost all! The world forsakes me! But of what value is the world to one who is no longer loved? Inhumanity! barbarity! How despicable is mankind in my eyes!

"Do not believe that I still love him! I fly from him, I shun him, and I am proud of it!

"Vain delusion of my agony! My thirst for vengeance confuses me. Alas! I love him more madly than ever! What do I say? I will forget the faithless one; I will forget him!

"Do not visit me, Sophie, you are suspected in this house!

"My head is so confused by all the unspeakable sufferings of my heart that I fear I will lose my reason. Great and merciful God! is this thy world? What dark treachery! how tumultuous, how perplexed are my thoughts! He has sworn that he will bring me down to destruction. I ought to abhor him, and I weep for him!

"Yes, yes, for you, whom I love eternally! How could you be so ungrateful to me? No, no! it is not possible! Believe

me, Sophie, he loves me still, or he has never loved me! How can he torture me so fearfully? He was lately in the theatre; when my eye fell upon him I began to tremble so violently that every one remarked it. I could not utter a word; I was speechless!"

"Listen to me, dear Sophie. I have written to Sylberg; I have implored him not to be cruel to me! What do you say to this? I have written to him that I still worship him! I tremble for myself! I have no self-control. His answer will decide my fate!

"The pen falls from my hand! Farewell, farewell!"

"Sophie, you know my weakness, my repentance, my sorrow, and you know my love, which is stronger than them all. You have seen the burden which weighs down my heart; you know the grief and the terror which fills it; you know my unhappy resolution to love that man with my last breath, who has made me so wretched. Just now, Sophie, in the midst of these painful circumstances, I received a visit from Countess P. and Herr B. How much that is base and evil have they told me of the Baron! If their account is true, he is the most despicable of all men!

"I have promised to give up this love. Yes, Sophie, my lips have spoken, and my duty, but not my heart; this tender heart which will beat for ever for that unworthy object which inflamed it!

"Ah! cruel one, why did you seek the love of a passionate soul like mine, which yet possesses more strength, more constancy, than your own—unworthy idol of my soul!

"But God will revenge me! You will find some woman whom you worship, as cold, as indifferent to your love as you are to mine. I say to you again the man who forsakes me can never be true!

"No! no! Max, you cannot be true, but the curse of your inconstancy will become your greatest torment.

“My heart will follow you unceasingly, and even after my death, my dark shadow will fill you with dread dismay.

“Ah! pitiless one! I cast myself into the arms of my God. I will not be your victim!

“If he had the humanity to make known to me my wretchedness; to declare his inborn faithlessness! Better to die by lightning than by slow, cunning poison! When fatally wounded tear off the bandages and let me bleed to death! If he himself had disclosed to me his true character, I should have had one consolation—I would not have been compelled to despise him; his sincerity would, at least, have been one virtue in my eyes.

“But what do I say? He never loved me; these are his own words, everywhere spoken!

“Can anything be more inhuman, more monstrous? Is it not terrible enough to be separated in this world from what you love, but also to despise it?

“How far is death preferable to this pitiful life? Destruction itself is no evil to those whom love forsakes!

“Are we then only born for this constant, inward struggle; this never-ceasing torment? Shall the weakest of all God’s creatures be a model of heroism, and the poor heart not be justified in seeking everywhere for some object of comfort—even in extorting it? Are we women only playthings? intended for social amusement? Alas! where love burns like mine, there can be no shame! My passion finds its justification in its strength! But the pride of having loved a worthy object, is there more justification in that than in remaining true to an unworthy object? Oh! what a heart has he broken! a heart that is still wholly his own!”

CHAPTER XLII.

WE receive through these extracts from Charlotte's letters, the most harrowing proof of her sorrowful condition, and at the same time, intimations of the events occurring immediately after her illness, by which the pitiful condition of this sorely-tried girl of eighteen summers was greatly augmented; she was thus led on to a higher degree of desperation; and even a less feeling and tender heart than that of the young actress would have been driven to destruction and death.

We have seen that her love triumphed over every other consideration, and that even her strong suspicion against Sylberg's character and past life had no influence over her.

The severe testimony against him seemed only to increase his power over her; some demoniac influence appeared to be driving her on irrecoverably, towards the object of her fatal love.

The Baron, who knew too well the weakness of a loving woman's heart, had fallen upon the last and the most subtle stratagem by which he knew he must either lose Charlotte entirely, or triumph completely over her heart and banish every influence hostile to himself.

In his guilty consciousness, he became convinced that the Ackerman family had, in some unknown way, become acquainted with his conduct to the Countess Lindenkron. Charlotte had scarcely called her name, before his evil conscience whispered to him that all was discovered, and that the mask he had heretofore worn would no longer avail him; he assumed instantly the appearance of a man deeply wounded in heart and honor; and with indications of wild despair, he charged his beloved with the guilt of his destroyed happiness.

Iago himself could not have played this last master-stroke with greater results; and the pale terror of Charlotte's countenance, when he tore himself forcibly from her on that fatal

evening, convinced him that the arrow, with which he had pierced that true and innocent heart, could never be removed.

From that time he secluded himself entirely for many days, and this confirmed the many rumors as to Charlotte's illness, and her love affair with the handsome Danish officer ; and this caused Sylberg's friends to inquire curiously into the cause of his sudden disappearance from their circle.

All Hamburg was soon informed that Charlotte's family opposed her engagement ; that Schröder, for his own private interests as director of the theatre, had violently separated his young sister from her lover. This was credited by many, as it was supposed that in the event of her marriage, Charlotte would certainly leave the stage ; and it would indeed be difficult to find a substitute for the talented and renowned young actress. Schröder had enemies ready to declare that he was sacrificing his sister, and even her mother was suspected of the same motive. In short, the story had general circulation, and injured Schröder's reputation materially ; this added greatly, of course, to their distress on Charlotte's account. They received anonymous letters filled with the most terrible reproaches ; over-zealous friends retailed to them the judgments of the public ; and one day a malicious editorial appeared in the *Altona Journal* ridiculing the Schröder stage and all the troupe ; only the young Mademoiselle Ackerman found grace in the eyes of the unknown critic.

What could Schröder and his mother say to these malicious rumors and accusations ? A defence even to the friends of his house was impossible. The truth would have compromised Charlotte, and proved that, assisted by Sylberg, she had deceived mother, brother, and sister. Consideration for Charlotte's good character demanded the most cautious moderation, and Schröder was resolved to be silent, hoping that the truth would at last prevail. The greatest possible forbearance was shown to Charlotte, but her deeply wounded and excitable heart could not fail to read, in the glances and manner of the family, that she alone

was guilty of all the sufferings and shame of those around her, and that tenderness and forbearance were her reward.

So much bitter but silent sorrow, so great a struggle between her heart and her fate, destroyed in her breast the last feeling of security.

She saw and heard nothing of Sylberg. He had disappeared. No one uttered his name, but in her memory those last words he had uttered on leaving her, and the tones of his voice, ever resounded. She believed she still heard him charge her with the guilt of his destroyed happiness, with her faithlessness and treachery!

“Oh, heavens! it was only his despair that spoke. His noble heart had no part in this terrible mistake!”

This was her only comfort. Her imagination grasped at a thousand happy possibilities, and for a few moments she could conceal from herself the fact that he had left her for ever in scorn—yes, in irreconcilable scorn! But when she awaked from these happy dreams, when the sad reality stood before her, when she compared the noble and well-beloved image in her heart with the picture which men drew of him, when she thought of the crimes of his past life, in connection with the evil he had brought upon her, how pitilessly he had deserted her, with what triumphant mockery he had torn himself away from her, it was no longer in her power to defend him. The pale, soft phantom of the unhappy Bertha, as she lay in her coffin at Kugelsort, rose up like an avenging angel between her and this man, and seemed to offer her protection from his terrible love.

In these tormenting doubts, there was as little healing for the sick soul as there had been in the unhappy path of Sylberg's love. There was no stability or security in her doubts, or his love. One continually struggled against the other, and in this interior contest she lost all firm foundation for her feet. She wandered in strange paths, and felt at times, with the firm conviction of her soul, that if Sylberg stood before her, notwithstanding the annihilating testimony of the whole world, she would throw herself exultant upon his breast, even if his arm

should surround her with the bonds of everlasting destruction That in such a state of mind her art should lose all interest for her, that she should in fact feel an aversion to her profession, was most natural, and it would not be a matter of surprise to us, if her genius could not outlive the death of her heart in its morning glow of youth and love.

Charlotte was an actress in feeling and creative fancy, and the storm which had destroyed her life's sweetest blossom must of course wither her heart's spring.

She who had lived and glowed for her art, who was accustomed only to view the realities of life as a reflection of the beautiful illusions which poetry created for her; in the sudden consciousness of pain and deception in her own heart, forgot the muses, in a word, ceased to believe in the harmony between life and her ideal. In later years, this highly-gifted nature would certainly have learned from experience that life, with its hostile contrasts, educates and liberalizes the true artist. This thought could not possibly be a saving light to one who saw in her first youth, even in the rising of her dazzling star, all the remainder of her life sink down in night and gloom.

The influence of Charlotte's fate upon her profession made her position in a house whose very existence was founded upon art, especially painful.

Schröder was forcibly reminded, in many ways, that his sister's inactivity was prejudicial to him, both in an artistic and economical point of view. He resolved, therefore, to speak to her on the subject earnestly and lovingly. He reminded her that an actor's calling was to forget himself, and to exhibit to the world the strange forms and characters of the realm of poetry and fiction; that her exalted intellect should master her grief, and the strength which would preserve her character unbound by fate, would make her worthy to attain the highest point in art, he implored her to return to her profession, and in its active service to strive after new courage and peace of mind.

For a long time Charlotte could only answer by tears. She

was greatly impressed by what her brother had said, and promised him to fulfil his wish, no matter what it cost her.

“Choose the role, then, in which you will appear, for the first time,” said Schröder, joyfully, “and let the world of Hamburg see that Charlotte Ackerman, even in the midst of her great trial, has not ceased to be an actress; has remained true to her genius. Speak, child, what shall the play be?”

“The loveliest pearls amongst Hamburg’s jewels shall be my Lotte’s this evening!”

“Pearls signify tears,” said she, with a painful smile. “Well, let it be *Olivie*, this new piece of Brandes’, which has been so long in the Repertoire. As *Olivie* I shall not need to act.”

“*Olivie*!” said Schröder, perplexed. “That is unutterably tragic. I beg you, Lotte, to select a comedy, or a gay opera.”

“Let it be *Olivie*,” said Charlotte, much moved. “The play is no favorite of mine; it is but a poor imitation of *Rutland* and *Emilia Galotti*; but I have more confidence in myself in this role now than in any other.

“The Hamburgers will see that the innocent can be unjustly condemned. Brother, I hold you to your word; I choose *Olivie*.”

“Good; you shall have your way. The parts have been long studied. *Dorothea* will play *Countess Montana*, *Reinike* the *Marchese*.”

“God be thanked!” said *Frau Ackerman*, “I will wager a hundred to one that *Olivie* will succeed better than *Othello* or *Rutland*. Now, dear child, I am pleased with you, and forgive you for your idleness.”

Truth to say, Schröder’s and Charlotte’s condemnation of *Olivie* was deserved. The whole piece was founded upon the words dagger and poison, and poison and dagger. There was a secret marriage, a secret murder, and all other unholy mysteries, crowded into a tragedy of five acts; and it was strange to say, dedicated to that celebrated *Amelia* of *Weimer*, of whose friendship at a later period *Goëthe* and *Schiller* were so proud. And yet Charlotte selected this play against the wish of her

brother. We can explain this with a word. The role of Olivie seemed as if written expressly for her, under her present circumstances. In the words of Olivie she could say to the Hamburg public, "Look! just so am I! Place this devil of a step-mother by my side, and I should go mad, and we would both share the cruel fate of disdained and slandered, but innocent love." She would represent herself and her own fate. The rascal Ricardo, whom Olivie was to wed, although she abhorred him, was he not, in all respects, that Sylberg whom the world painted to her. But Leontio, the noble, knightly, wild and unjust Leontio, so dearly loved by Olivie, and from whom cruel fate would separate her, was he not Sylberg's real representative? That Sylberg whom she adored, although he had contemned and rejected her, as Leontio had disdained the poor Olivie.

In the brain of a young actress of Charlotte's fiery temperament there are often as wondrous fancies as in her heart. She was certain that Sylberg would be in the theatre, and that her acting of Olivie would convince him, more than any other evidence, of her innocence—would reconcile him to her, and lead him, like the noble but too passionate Leontio, back to his beloved. Yes, her art, which had brought to her so many great and proud results, should now yield the dearest of all triumphs—the victory of true love over unjust suspicions and contempt. This hope had more fascination in Charlotte's eyes than all the fame, all the laurel-wreaths in the world. She commended her love, therefore, with a trusting heart, to Thalia's protecting care.

"Oh, no! where there is nothing the Kaiser has lost his right," said Eckhof, after the last rehearsal; shaking his head thoughtfully, and prophesying evil things.

"Yes, you are right, friend," said Charlotte, "as to the Kaiser, but the artist, if he has genius, his rights begin only when he creates everything from nothing."

"So," cried Eckhof; "but Lotte, I demand your confession. As to Minna, you remember, when, to gratify you, I made

nothing out of much. How was it, Lotte? What prejudice had you against the well-known words of Tellheim?"

The young artist changed color at this remembrance, pointed to the MS. in her hand, and said confusedly :

" My answer is here ; Olivie will explain all ; wait, friend ! Olivie will tell you more of your Lotte than she can tell herself."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE intelligence that Charlotte would appear again upon the stage, excited the Hamburg public more than the announcement of the new piece. Not only those who were patrons of the theatre, but those who were interested in the actress, and had heard the many reports in relation to her love affair and her family difficulties, were anxious to obtain tickets. The private life of the artist had as great a charm for the public as art itself, and when so mysterious and romantic a love story was connected with the most renowned name upon the stage, curiosity was irrepressible. Not one of the many hundreds who took their seats in the theatre this evening, doubted but that there would be some public demonstration. Many young men, in their enthusiasm for Charlotte, threatened to call out the Director and demand a public explanation of his conduct to his sister.

The house was packed, and there was uncommon restlessness and excitement before the beginning of the play.

The curtain rose at last. Only when Dorothea appeared as the Countess Montana, and commanded Francesco to call Olivie, was the audience still; every glass, every eye, was fixed upon the door through which Olivie should enter.

And now Charlotte appeared, dressed in mourning, with white roses in her hair. This was a signal for a most thundering applause. Olivie began her part, and soon, by the magic of her acting, enchained all hearts. Out of a tearful role, had Charlotte created a character so profoundly tragic, even in the first scene, that the whole interest of the piece was concentrated upon her person; reason no longer controlled the audience; feeling had complete mastery. Soon no eye was free from tears! The sorrows of the innocent Olivie awaked sympathy and pity in the rudest heart; her true and faithful love glimmered like a sweet and kindly star over her wrecked soul, and the cruel night, pregnant with

fate, and every time she called the name of Leontio, her countenance shone as if drunk with happiness. No one who heard this tone and observed the rapturous emotion of her features, could suppress their heartfelt pity.

If you read now this play of *Olivie*, it is impossible to comprehend by what magic of art and tragic feeling Charlotte made of it so perfect a work of genius. The journals announced that the young Ackerman, as the innocent, injured and suffering *Olivie*, had torn every heart with anguish, and drawn tears from the coldest spectators; in brief, she made much out of nothing, and created for this poor play a reputation throughout all Germany.

With the absorbed and increasing interest of the audience, they had reached the closing scene of the fourth act, that scene in which the Countess Montana, with a dagger in her hand, sought to force her step-daughter to confess from whom she had learned the secret of her father's murder, when suddenly Charlotte, upon whom all eyes were fixed, stopped, stood for a moment motionless, gazing into one of the front loges, and then fell fainting into the arms of Reinike. An indiscribable excitement arose among the spectators: "She is dead, she is dead," cried hundreds of voices. "No, no, only insensible," was repeated from the stage, and the curtain fell rapidly.

Schröder bore his sister to her room, and in a short time she opened her eyes, wearily, but her exhaustion was so great that it was evident she could not complete her part. Madam Better took the role of *Olivie*, and the piece was happily concluded. Schröder uttered a sigh of relief when the curtain fell. In the corridor he met Doctor Unzer, and exclaimed, "Oh that I had taken your advice, and not allowed Charlotte to appear in this fearful tragedy; this role resembles her own sad fate, and almost every word was a new wound to her heart. I saw in the first act that she would not get through."

"Would to God there had been no other cause for her fainting!" said Unzer.

"I do not understand you," said Schröder.

"I and many others saw," said Unzer, "that Charlotte paused suddenly, and, as if enchained by some magic power, gazed into one of the front boxes; other eyes took the same direction, and many whispered 'yes, it is he—it is he.' I saw clearly that Sylberg changed color, and was so confused by the general attention directed towards him that he drew back and smilingly whispered something in the ear of a lady seated near him. I had observed him before, and I am convinced that it was his purpose to confuse and distress Charlotte, and that he had placed himself where she was almost forced to see him.

"Can that be possible? the scoundrel! the base scoundrel!" exclaimed Schröder.

"Wait, only wait! I will send my lamp-cleaners after him with a horse-whip!"

"You cannot do that, Fritz; for God's sake! no undue haste," said Unzer; "your best resource will be to send Charlotte away from Hamburg. I am now absolutely convinced that she must leave here. I am convinced that she still loves this man, and that he has the power in his hands to make Charlotte and all of us wretched. Away with her, then—away from Hamburg, until through the influence of some powerful friend in Copenhagen we can have Sylberg sent to some distant point."

"But where shall she go?" said Schröder, despairingly.

"Not too far for you to have your eye upon her—not near enough for this man to reach her. Send her to Wandsbeck to Herr von Schimmelman, he is a faithful friend of your house, and will watch her closely."

"And yet it was at Schimmelman's you first saw the Baron," replied Schröder.

"But I have learned in the last few days that the Freiherr is greatly enraged against him. He has declared that he knows fearful circumstances connected with the past life of this man, which he cannot make known without compromising the living and the dead. Sylberg is considered the best recruiting officer in the Danish army, and he has an art about him which makes him dangerous to a poetical and innocent girl. Charlotte will

be nowhere more secure against evil influences and cunning snares than at Wandsbeck, under the protection of a man who has a high position at the Court of Copenhagen, and influence with Sylberg's King. Rest assured he will be on his guard with Schimmelmänn.

"Be it so," said Schröder, decisively; "here is my hand; to-morrow I will go myself to my friend, make him acquainted with the whole unhappy affair, and ask his protection for my sister."

"I will accompany you," said Unzer; "prepare your mother for this plan, and let Charlotte know nothing of it till she receives the invitation——"

"Hush; she is coming!" said Schröder, pointing to a group of ladies who were approaching and conducting Charlotte to her carriage.

Dorothea remained behind, and whispered to her brother: "Lotte declares that she will never again put her foot upon the stage. She said this with a glance and tone which you know; and I am convinced no power on earth will change her resolution."

The Doctor looked at his friend significantly, and Schröder replied in deep emotion, "Yes, you are right. What unhappiness has this miserable creature brought upon us! First he destroys her peace and ours; then gives a death-blow to her good name, and then fills her with abhorrence for her art. That was my last hope for her restoration to peace and happiness.

"Go home, Dorothea, and put Lotte to bed; I will soon be there with Unzer and tell you all."

CHAPTER XLIV.

A FEW evenings after this some officers from Holstein sat together in a wine cellar, drinking and rejoicing in the promotion of one of the youngest amongst them. His name was Eyerol, and he had just received his commission as Captain, and the little circle consisted of his nearest friends in the regiment.

The glasses had been filled to overflowing, wine had opened the hearts of the young men, and the conversation was gay and unrestrained. The last novelty in the regiment had been discussed; the chase, horses, state and family news in Altona, and then wound up, as almost all young men do, with accounts of love adventures—gay mockery and sarcasm.

Captain Eyerol was well known in his regiment to be dangerous. With his fiery brown eyes he had made a breach in many a prude's heart, and many a beautiful Altona girl blushed when his name was accidentally mentioned in society.

"His heart has been in the country, but now we will see what conquests he will make with his captain's epaulettes. If you advance rapidly, Eyerol, you will soon become a generalissimo amongst women."

"God forbid," said the fair Lieutenant Dirking; "for then Major Sylberg must make way for him."

"Many thanks for such promotion," said Eyerol, dryly and angrily. "Sylberg may keep his post; I do not envy him."

"What is the news as to him and the little Ackerman?" said Starklof, curiously. "The whole city is full of rumors as to the celebrated Charlotte; but the news is so contradictory one does not know what to believe. One moment he has disdained her; another she has rejected him. I have just heard that Schröder had turned him, 'neck and heels,' out of the house."

"Corrupt and base is every affair with which Sylberg is connected," said Eyerol. "No, my friend, do not call my name in the same breath with such a scoundrel. My eyes have been

fully opened by what I heard last Monday, in a most distinguished circle, as to his past life."

"So you were on Monday the guest of Freiherr von Schimmelmann. Things must be going badly with the Major."

"What a pitiful soul he must have to deceive such a girl as Charlotte Ackerman!" cried Eyerol. "Only think, dear friends, he has completely crushed this glorious creature, and her family are in grave doubt as to her recovery. He has been dismissed with shame and contempt, but he pursues and persecutes her in every possible way. The first time she appears upon the stage after her illness, he takes the foremost place in the front loge, and spreads himself like a Calcutta cock, that her eye may fall upon him during the performance, and when he has, in the eyes of the whole audience, reached his aim, and the poor girl has fallen lifeless upon the stage, he is the only one of the hundreds assembled who remains cold-blooded, and chats with the most indifferent air in the world with the lady next to him."

"It is said that his new mistress is a rich baroness of Steinau. He goes with her everywhere, and they promenade every afternoon in the Alster Allée."

"Baroness indeed!—rich!" cried Eyerol. Do you not know Caroline of Glückstadt? Sylberg plays her gallant and her lover. This is a 'Theatre coup,' nothing more, to conceal his conduct in the Ackerman house."

"This is just like one of his tricks," cried Dirking.

"It is as I say," said Eyerol. "He has declared that he will force the Ackermans to leave Hamburg."

"Say yourself, Dirking, is this conduct worthy of an officer? I should not be surprised, if, through this affair, the Danish uniform should be brought into greater discredit than ever."

This seemed to be the general opinion, and this conversation over Sylberg's character, from the lips of his comrades, gave undoubted proof that they thought him unworthy of his uniform, that he was disliked and shunned, and that even the *esprit de corps*, which has so much weight with young officers, had no effect in this case.

CHAPTER XLV.

THAT which Schröder had long feared had now come to pass ; and in spite of every means to prevent it which wisdom and caution could suggest.

The morning after the representation of *Olivie*, Charlotte's love affair with the Danish recruiting officer, with all its details; was known throughout Hamburg, together with the most unfavorable and strange intelligence as to Sylberg's character and life. He was indeed spoken of as a masked swindler, in the style of *Cagliostro*, of whom every great city at that time claimed to have an exemplar.

The consequence of this was a change in public opinion in favor of Schröder and his mother ; and those who had a few days before pitied Charlotte and charged her family with selfishness and cruelty, now approved their conduct fully. They declared it to be impossible that any man of honor or morals could have been guilty of so low a revenge as to bring an open scandal upon a young girl, simply because her family were opposed to him, and thus through this unexampled barbarity, draw the eyes of the public upon their engagement.

This was a just condemnation of Sylberg, and even the declared friends and admirers of the young actress confessed that she had been guilty of inexplicable error in bestowing her affections upon so unworthy an object. In the minds of most men, only great levity of character combined with a sickly, excitable, sentimental imagination, could have led a girl of Charlotte's intellect and blameless reputation, into such crooked paths. She, the renowned actress, almost worshipped by all the great intellects of Hamburg, had bestowed the treasures of her love upon a man whose social position was as widely separated from hers, as his heart, his intellect, and his character.

This was the unanimous conviction of the public, and it was a mild sentence. Charlotte was more pitied and sympathized

with than sternly condemned. No one defended the Baron, but a thousand mitigating circumstances spoke in her favor.

In short, every one recognised now the high degree in which this incomparable actress reigned over their hearts; they felt that in her own sorrows she exercised the same magic influence, by which in the world of fiction, she wrought such wonderful results upon the stage. Charlotte's Rutland, her Emilia Gallotti, her Olivie, stood by her side as protecting and pleading genii, and in glancing back at those touching, pure, and lovely forms, even the cold moralist could not condemn the woman through whose genius these sweet images of fancy had received life, breath, and motion. "Our Rutland," "our Olivie," &c., these were the names by which this poor young girl was designated, whose private sorrows now awakened more interest than her talent had ever produced.

But the public voice was loud in condemnation of the author of Charlotte's unhappiness; and Sylberg's name in connection with Charlotte's was now resounding in every saloon in Hamburg, and whenever he appeared in public, he excited universal attention. This was at first embarrassing, but he was soon accustomed to it; he knew all eyes were fixed upon him, curious to see the man who had won the heart of a Charlotte Ackerman.

With bold bearing, and cold proud mien, he passed through the inquisitive crowd. He was generally to be seen on horseback, with waving plumes, dashing through the Alster Allée at noon when the beau monde were there promenading. He was gay and unembarrassed, as if returning from a victorious tournament. He played the knight without fear and without reproach, with right Danish gasconade, and thus proved to the world that he cared but little for their opinion, and that he was far above the narrow-minded morality of the good citizens. In order to place his intercourse with Charlotte in the right perspective before the public, and to prove to them that he had never felt a sincere heartfelt affection for this daughter of a burger house, Sylberg fell upon a plan which, if it did not suc-

ceed in this object, would at least wound Charlotte in the depths of her soul.

We have learned from Eyerol that Sylberg, in the midst of the worst reports as to his character, had formed a new engagement with a lady, his equal in rank and position.

The splendor of her appearance, the victorious pride of her mien, as she walked on Sylberg's arm through the Allée, convinced all observers that she was a woman of rank. It was said she was the widowed Baroness from Steinau. The police, however, soon discovered that this was a mystification, and one lovely morning she disappeared from the scene of action.

Before this catastrophe, however, an ominous change took place in the life of Charlotte, which dated from that evening when she declared solemnly to her mother and sister that she would never again appear upon the stage. The severest pain and the greatest happiness have this in common, in their influence upon all excitable natures, they estrange such natures from their interior life and develope all hostile opposites.

That evening, when Charlotte recovered from her insensibility in the theatre, she felt that she had been robbed of her reason in the moment in which she looked upon the faithless Sylberg; that then the whole of her past life had been annihilated, and she only recovered from that stroke of fate to renounce her profession for ever; it now seemed to her a horrid irony against herself and her sad fate.

Her celebrity, her talent, her enthusiastic love of art; how empty, how hollow, did it all appear in comparison with the man who had made her so wretched, and by one single glance had swept away her whole ideal world.

What would she not have given never to have been renowned; never to have believed in this dazzling world of fantasy and sweet illusions; which now that the sad realities of life had triumphed over her heart, appeared to her to be a realm of shadows, a fantastic fairy tale, born of foam and disappearing in mist, when a rash hand sought to detain the sweet and odorous structure.

Was it not her art, with all its glittering glory, that first attracted Sylberg and interested him in her? If she had lived a quiet simple life, protected by calm and regular habits, without talent, without a name, without position in the world, he would never have observed her, while the height to which her genius had exalted her had flattered his ambition and inflamed his passion for her.

But this was not the only cause of her aversion to a profession which she had followed with such dazzling success. This unconquerable feeling took deeper root in her heart when she thought of the difference between fictitious and real life, between those exalted tragedies in which the poet speaks to humanity in touching and powerful tones, and by the inspiration of poetry reconciles earth to heaven, and this pitiful prosaic and yet agonizing life of realities. In the ordinary course of common life the world sees only common events; they do not know that in certain griefs every moment is a tragedy, and every tear seems pressed from the heart for a lost world.

With the passionate sentimentality of her nature, Charlotte resolved to make her life eminently tragic, and to lay down for ever upon the grave of her love the wreath of her young fame.

“Why should I be an artist, when I can never hope to reach the highest aim in life; that goal at which truth and poetry alone can be united? What is art, without the joyful hope that at some time and somewhere a point will be reached where the heart stands breathlessly still, and poetry begins to be truth and reality, and all our glorious dreams are changed into earthly bliss! The pale nun in her cloister—yes, the Indian widow upon the flaming funeral pile, may believe in the poetry of life, while they hold fast with an earthly splendor to their love, and dare bear it triumphantly with them in the grave.

“But what shall I do with this poisoned, cruel, crushed blossom in the holy temple of art, where only gay and living flowers may grow and prosper?

“I have loved too profoundly for this mortal heart, too briefly, too fleetingly, for this immortal soul. I no longer believe in

poetry; I no longer trust her delusive promises. Let me then say farewell to the stage. No one who sees me hereafter would believe that I played Rutland, Emilia and Beaumarchais; they would know that I brought my own fate to public view, and that notwithstanding the strange names and costumes, they looked but upon the wretched and betrayed Charlotte.

"I know now, brother, that you were right when you warned me not to give any occasion to the world to trouble themselves about my person. When the private life of an actress passes the line which separates it from the stage, all illusion ceases."

In this way did Charlotte justify herself to her family for her resolution to leave the stage.

She relinquished her fame, the splendor of a renowned name, her talent, and her heartfelt pride in her profession, in order to engrave upon the tomb of her unhappy love the seal of a higher consecration, and to tear apart freely, with her own hand, that bond which united her with the ideal world and her own youthful enthusiasm.

Sylberg should know by this how mighty was her love; how boundless her despair. Nothing was too dear to be made a death-offering to her brief but enchanting dream of love.

There was pride in the thought, (but it was the pride of a noble artist heart,) that her disappearance from the stage would appear to the Hamburgers an irreparable loss.

It is not in our power to give the contents of the letter which Charlotte wrote at this time to the Baron. We know, that in her letter to Sophie, she confessed she had told Sylberg that, though forever separated from him, she still worshipped him; she implored him not to be cruel and hard-hearted against her; and in conclusion, wafted him a farewell for this life.

This letter was written under the influence of the most agonizing jealousy. We remember, in how many ways the Major had sought to torture her by his faithlessness and coldness, not only by turning away from her when they met accidentally in the street, but he went so far as to pass by her windows in an elegant carriage, with his new betrothed by his side; and the

noble lady, with a mocking laugh, put her lorgnette to her eyes and gazed at the home of her lover's forsaken flame.

After considering all these circumstances, Frau Ackerman decided that Charlotte should leave Hamburg for a time.

They resolved to avail themselves of the assured friendship of Freiherr von Schimmelman, and ask him to give an asylum to the poor suffering girl at his beautiful country seat.

Spring was at hand—already there were lovely sunny days, and the glorious Elbe was rolling and tossing its last ice flakes towards the North Sea, as a symbol of its new-found freedom. All nature seemed imbued with new life and action, and mankind, emulating the earth, shook off the rough burden of winter joyfully.

Charlotte had a great love for nature and its pastoral charms, and nothing could be more healthful to her than this complete change of life and its surroundings; this liberation from all the sad and torturing circumstances which had depressed her since her last illness. She knew that her love affair with the Baron was an open scandal; that the author of all her sorrow and shame was utterly indifferent to her disconsolate condition; that he had formed a new engagement, no doubt with the most cruel calculation to wound her. She heard him daily condemned and cursed, without daring to utter one word in his defence. What could have been more welcome to her than a withdrawal from the scenes which constantly reminded her of the unhappy past? of her blighted youth, her tarnished reputation, and of that man who was a constant object of pain, anguish, and humiliation to her? although, as she had written to him, he had never ceased to be adored by her—to be the idol of her soul.

But Charlotte trembled, and every drop of blood vanished from her face when Schimmelman entered the room and announced that he had come to the city only for the purpose of taking her back with him to Wandsbeck, where a friend of her early days awaited her with great impatience.

“He has just returned from a long journey,” said the merry

Freiherr, "but you cannot guess who he is. He is the most beautiful youth under God's sun, and has already disturbed many a maiden's heart; he came to Wandsbeck with a fragrant violet wreath upon his head, and his first question was, 'Is Lotte here?' No, charming Herr Spring, said I; but notwithstanding that, come in to us and make yourself at home; Madame Lark and Monsieur Cookoo will keep you company in the woods, and I will fly to the city and bring back before the sun sets, the lovely little shepherdess, and to-morrow we will have an Arcadia of our own."

In this kindly way the old gentleman gave his young friend to understand the object of his visit, and after some apparent reluctance the mother gave her consent.

"We will not even ask the Herr Director's permission," said Schimmelman, laying his hand upon Schröder's shoulder, "but we will take the risk of having to pay half a year's wages for a broken contract."

Dorothea was well pleased; she knew that Charlotte could not be trusted to better hands than those of the Freiherr and his wife; they loved her as their own child, and she had passed many happy days at the beautiful castle of Wandsbeck.

There seemed a mystery and suddenness about this removal from home, which at first disquieted Charlotte, and it did not escape her attention that her old friend watched her curiously at table, as if he was seeking to read some enigma in the depths of her soul.

After dinner many friends and neighbors came in to greet the Freiherr, and to see Charlotte before her departure. Klopstock was among them, and promised soon to visit them at their lovely country seat.

"Come, all of you," said Schimmelman, heartily and hospitably, when he took leave. "Adieu, friends, I hope to meet again soon."

His carriage rolled away in the direction of Wandsbeck, and when Schröder returned to the family he exclaimed:

“God be praised that she is gone. There is no other means to save her ; if this does not avail, then we must yield Lotte up to this unblessed fatality ; then are there powers in her soul which are potent against all human precaution and effort, and against which God alone can protect her.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

CHARLOTTE was received by the family of the Freiherr with the most considerate and thoughtful love; his wife and his two daughters, Julianna and Irmengarde, were beautiful and good, and emulated each other in their cares and attentions to the young actress, seeking in every way to assuage her melancholy, and cheer her wounded spirit.

In this circle, where so much that was genuine, lovely and tender were united, Charlotte soon experienced a healthful influence. She felt that she was treated with considerate love and simple candor, without suspicion or embarrassment; and this had never been the case at home since her unhappy intercourse with Sylberg. A new household spirit, with its beautiful and peaceful emotions, received her in its hallowed circle. No involuntary sigh of her mother, no grave look of her brother, no sister's silent tears, reminded her of her misfortunes or of her guilt, everything was avoided that could give her pain, and no allusion was made to Hamburg or the theatre.

No day passed in which guests were not received at the castle. This constant change in social life forced Charlotte more and more out of herself, and insensibly alleviated her sadness; and the charming landscape around her, was also healing to her spirit. She was compelled to exercise some power over herself, and yet she did not lose the happiness of that solitude which allowed her in her sad hours to belong to herself alone.

The great park with its dark groups of pine, its green pastures and babbling brooks, was her favorite resting-place; there she yielded herself wholly to the magic charm which the awakened Spring exercised upon her; she walked for hours in these sunny paths, only wishing that it might be ever as still and peaceful around her; and then would pass over her that feeling of a newly-awakened soul—of that exalted peace which the May sunshine and flowers exercise upon the invalid just

recovered from dangerous illness—she was refreshed by the fresh fragrance of the earth, and the air which played about her temples and her brow seemed like the breath of a milder zone. Her grief lost its dark form under these soft influences of nature; the terror was banished from her soul, and a soft elegiac frame of mind was a happy presage to her friends, that the poetry and youth of her heart was not utterly broken; and that perhaps another spring would be granted to this sweet blossom.

This glad conviction induced the Freiherr to entreat Schröder to allow Charlotte to remain yet longer at Wandsbeck. In conclusion the Freiherr wrote :

“I remember our agreement, and I will know how to take advantage of the favorable moment to complete her cure; and we will leave it to the noble Ulrika to conduct this wandering star back to its orbit.

“From Copenhagen I have as yet no news, but I know the justice of the Duke of Augustenburg too well to have any anxiety on that account.

“Later, but not too late, you will receive full satisfaction.”

CHAPTER XLVII.

THESE glad and consoling anticipations would have been utterly destroyed, if a providential hand had not watched over Charlotte, and protected her life from a danger which lay beyond all human calculation.

In the third week of her visit, the Freiherr proposed to the ladies and two gentlemen guests from Schleswig, to visit a grange a short distance from the Castle, where he had fine stables and model English horses, of which he was justly proud; in fact, they were superior to any in the land of Holstein.

They soon arrived at the grange, the ladies in the carriage, the gentlemen on horseback.

The visitors were charmed with the cleanliness and order which prevailed, and above all with the beauty of the horses. They wandered from stall to stall, comparing the blooded steeds of Flanders, of Cornwallis, and of Arabia.

The Freiherr loved his horses, and knew each one by name. Turning to Lotte, he said—

“You are an expert rider. Look at my brown Sybylla, with the cunning witch eyes. There is no other lady’s horse like her in the world. Irmengarde rode her last summer, and now she shall belong to you. You can put her to the proof at once, if you will.”

“Most gladly,” said Charlotte, who was passionately fond of riding. The horse was led forward, and she sprang lightly into the saddle, and her grace and confidence justified the praises of her old friend.

The gentlemen applauded loudly, and Schimmelman declared jestingly he would take her for a Cossack maiden of the Don.

“You shall see,” said Charlotte; and like every other woman, proud of the praise which men generally reserve for themselves, she turned her horse into the middle of the path, gave him a sharp blow, and sprang the fence with a bold leap. The spec-

tators were filled with terror. One moment the horse stood on the other side, motionless, as if lamed, and trembling violently; but feeling the bit, he became wild, sprang from side to side, and then, in spite of bit and bridle, he turned and dashed off with lightning speed in the direction of Wandsbeck. This was a fearful sight to the spectators, who expected every moment to see the bold rider thrown from her horse. Schimmelman mounted a horse and dashed after her, but she had greatly the start, and soon both horse and rider were out of sight.

Fifteen minutes later, the Freiherr reached the borders of his park, and heard in the distance a man crying for help. He followed the sound, which seemed to come from the neighborhood of the old Observatory. His gardener Conrad, pale with terror, came forward to meet him, and told him that Mademoiselle Ackerman was lying dead near the tower, from which she had no doubt fallen. He hastened to the spot, and the scene somewhat justified Conrad's opinion. Charlotte lay on the ground, close to the tower; her temple was bleeding freely, and no trace of the horse was to be seen.

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the Freiherr, and kneeling down, he drew the supposed corpse to his heart, when he felt that Charlotte still breathed. Conrad brought water from the spring, and in a few moments she awaked to consciousness. When she saw the bloody handkerchief with which Schimmelman had bound her brow, she uttered a loud cry, and felt the pain in her temple. He comforted her, and declared the wound to be insignificant.

"God be thanked!" said Conrad. "I was there by the pond, heard a cry, saw Mademoiselle pale and bleeding upon the ground, and thought she had fallen from the tower."

"But, Conrad," said the Freiherr, "must not one first mount a tower before they can fall from it?"

"What do you say?" muttered Charlotte; "this is the fulfilment of a prophecy which a fortune-teller made to me some time ago."

"That is at least a proof that you should beware of sibyls and four-footed beasts," said Schimmelman. "Your brother is op-

posed to women riding on horseback, and he is right. You young Amazons do not know the difference between true courage and temerity."

The arrival of the two gentlemen put a stop to the good man's sermon. Charlotte arose from the ground trembling, but reached the castle without much difficulty, leaning on the arm of her protector. She was gay, and refused to see either the surgeon or the doctor.

Herr von Schimmelman announced to Charlotte's family a full account of her accident; and yet the next morning, in many of the Hamburg circles, it was told as the greatest novelty of the day, that the youngest daughter of Frau Ackerman, weary of her life, had thrown herself from the tower at Wandsbeck, and seemed only by a miracle to have escaped a frightful death.

Sylberg also heard this rumor. Since her farewell letter he considered her as having wholly given him up, but this intelligence restored his audacity. He immediately resolved to approach Charlotte, and by a letter induce her to grant him an interview, and for this purpose he would suggest a lonely hut in the neighborhood of Wandsbeck. Here she would be in his power; and either by persuasion or violence he would force her from her home and fly with her to Denmark.

While arranging the plan of this most horrible act of a life so rich in baseness and treachery, he received an order from his Colonel, which came like a thunder-clap in a clear sky. He was commanded to join his regiment within eight days at Schleswig, and there appear before a commission appointed by the King, and answer to many grave charges brought against him for neglect of his duties and his personal honor. In case he did not appear he would be immediately cashiered.

Sylberg was entirely ignorant as to the author of this fearful blow. He must endeavor to defend himself, and escape the shame with which he would be branded if dismissed from the army. For hours he could come to no conclusion. Mechanically he seized the order again and again, and stared at it with

fiery eyes. His pulse was beating like a hammer, and he was tempted to dash his head against the wall. He sought in vain in the chaos of his guilty life for the hand which had dealt him this blow. He was wandering without a rudder in an unknown sea.

And now, in the most wretched and hopeless hour of his life, his host entered and handed him a letter. He uttered a cry of joy when he recognised the writing of Major T. He knew that this letter contained more wisdom for him than all the sibylline books of the world. He tremblingly tore off the envelope, and his eye fell upon a name which explained all—the name of Schimmelman. Major T. informed him that it was whispered at Court and amongst the higher officers, that Freiherr von Schimmelman, who had been formerly a secretary of the King, and was in high favor at Court, had written to the Monarch, and given him a full account of Sylberg's conduct to Charlotte and her family; that his Majesty had immediately ordered a stern investigation. "What terrible imprudence have you been committing, Sylberg? I learn from General W. that the Prince of Augustenberg told him, many acts of your past life have come to light, which would banish a Russian officer to Siberia for life. In Heaven's name, or the devil's name, if you will, Max, what have you been doing? Even if you have given the little Ackerman a magic drink, or carried her off forcibly by night and fog, I still cannot look upon you as a greater traitor than a hundred others.

"When was a Danish officer tried by a special commission for a love affair? When had a foreign actress influence enough in Denmark to have an officer brought to judgment for such a bagatelle? Write at once, and pour me out *pure wine* in regard to this whole affair, and quickly, Max! Do you hear, quickly!

"I tell you that the noose that is about your neck will be tightened sooner than loosened.

"Give me the means to defend you—to convince the Prince of Augustenberg of your innocence. I mean well by you; I will fight for you with my tongue—my sword, if necessary. If

you have sowed too many wild oats in Hamburg I counsel you to retire for awhile to England. Do not wait, however, till you are condemned. I tell you, Max, if these things are true I will be no longer your friend and brother in arms. Write ! write ! and let your courier ride two horses to death at my cost, so that you relieve me of this terrible uncertainty."

Sylberg read this letter several times, and believed that he learned more from it than his friend knew.

Duke Frederick of Augustenburg had been for many years the intimate friend of Charlotte's brother. This powerful Duke was his superior officer, and if he knew him to be the enemy of Schröder his ruin was accomplished.

All this was discouraging, and Sylberg knew that his game was almost lost. But it was precisely this friendship between the Duke and the theatre director upon which he built his last plan of safety. He would get possession of Charlotte, and this would allay the threatened storm on all sides.

To win her heart again ; to persuade her to flight ; to marry her—then it would not be possible for the Duke, the Freiherr, or her family to ruin him.

In his passionate haste he gave himself no time for consideration. He forgot the first and great difficulty—how could he approach Charlotte ? The abyss at his feet seemed to rob him of his reason. He threw himself upon his horse, and, scarcely knowing his own purpose, dashed off in the direction of Wandsbeck.

When he came in sight, he checked his foaming horse. The view of the castle into which he had formerly been received as a guest, brought his thoughts into some sort of order ; he listened for some minutes near the park, believing that he heard voices, but soon found it was only the beating of his heart and the wind whispering in the tops of the trees. Now he began to consider what he must do, whither turn ; how could he reach the goal ? Had he not been enticed by a will-of-the-wisp ? He was so near Wandsbeck he heard the clock striking ; he suddenly

remembered his danger if he was discovered ; this alarmed him. He turned his horse and galloped off as quickly as he had come. He crossed the meadows and drew near the hut where he had hoped to have an interview with Charlotte ; the cabin stood in evil repute, it was a refuge for vagabonds and thieves, who dared not enter the city—a hiding-place for culprits. The host, who looked like a swindler, stretched his eyes when he saw his distinguished guest alight and ask a night's lodging. Sylberg knew how to deal with such men ; he took the old man aside, and whispered something in his ear ; this secured him not only quarters for the night, but all the assistance he needed to carry out his plan.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

ONCE more the eye of Providence watched over Charlotte and protected her from the schemes of this base man. The Baron had scarcely retreated from the Freiherr's district, when Herr von Schimmelman was informed of the appearance of a strange gentleman near the park, and before night he became fully convinced that it was Sylberg, and he knew he had taken refuge in the notorious hut.

This intelligence agitated Schimmelman, and he told his wife of the threatened danger. Sylberg's presence must, of course, be connected with Charlotte; he feared she was still carrying on a secret intercourse with him, but Madame S. was convinced to the contrary.

"Lotte is no hypocrite; she knows nothing of the Baron; she told Irmengarde this morning that she had discarded him, that she knew him to be unworthy. She was once under the influence of this man; this is no longer the case; her quiet cheerfulness in the last few days is no deceitful mask. I am decidedly opposed to showing the slightest distrust of her."

"Yes, you are right in that," said Schimmelman. "She shall know nothing of his presence or our anxiety, but shall feel secure and unembarrassed. But it seems to me time to invite the Countess Linden kron to come to us; you know it is Ulrika's desire to liberate this sweet girl for ever from the influence of this bad man."

"Everything is prepared for the reception of the Countess," said Madame S., "and I believe that Charlotte can now bear firmly the last disclosures as to Sylberg's character; her presence also will drive this scoundrel away from the neighborhood."

"Well, guard this girl as if she were your own child, Caroline. I will send for the Countess."

A half hour later the Freiherr joined the ladies at the tea-

table, jested and laughed merrily with them, and asked Charlotte in whose honor she wore the wreath of fresh young roses.

"You women seem to have a sort of instinct as to when an interesting guest is to appear. This is easily seen by the care with which you adorn yourselves."

"Who is coming, papa?" cried Irmengarde.

"Only a Jew," said Schimmelman, "who holds fast to the law of his fathers and his religion. Listen, ladies, how warmly our Lessing commends the worthy man." He drew a letter from his pocket, and read :

"Nathan will not only be called 'The Wise' by his own nation but also by Christians; his wisdom is one with love, one with that lofty virtue without which no faith is worthy of that holy name; kindness and toleration are its emblems. Grant 'Nathan the Wise' a kind reception in your house and in your hearts."

"So writes our Lessing of this Jew," said Schimmelman. Charlotte uttered a cry of surprise; a MS. was laid before her, and her eye fell upon the title, "Nathan the Wise," a drama in five acts, by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

"A drama from Lessing," cried Irmengarde; "Oh papa, this then is your Jew!"

"Listen!" said the Freiherr. "Lessing also says he has written the character of Recha for his dear friend, Charlotte Ackerman. Would it not be a reward for our Lessing to lead our dear Charlotte back to the temple of art? You will learn, dear Lotte, from 'Nathan the Wise' how to bear the burdens God lays upon you with noble self-sacrifice."

Charlotte was greatly agitated. It was the first time her sorrows had been alluded to in this friendly circle. Her kind friend, however, went on quietly with his remarks: "What has not our noble Lessing suffered during the last year! and yet he has never lost courage, but stood by his calling, a teacher and awaker of his countrymen. Read this, Lotte, and then decide if you will give up your art. May Lessing's great spirit awake

you to a new existence ! He declares that Recha can find no worthy representative but in yourself."

He rose, took the fair young artist's head between his hands, pressed a kiss upon her brow, and left the room.

Frau Schimmelman also rose and said : " We will leave our Lotte the rest of the evening with her new friend. In the morning she will tell us what 'Nathan the Wise' has confided to her.

" Good-night, dear Lotte, good-night !"

CHAPTER XLIX.

WHEN the sun stole the next morning through the curtains of Charlotte's room, a morning dream of spring, with its golden rosy light, seemed to hover over her. She was still sleeping, and her countenance expressed more than happiness—a blessed, holy peace—the wreath of roses and the MS. were both clasped in her hands.

In her dreams she was the noble Recha, bore all her sorrows, felt all her love, and at last made the fearful discovery that her lover was her brother, and Nathan not her father; she was in the golden, glittering palace of the Caliph; under the palms, in the holy cloister—all the wonders, tones, and forms of the East passed before her enraptured soul. Suddenly she awoke, and pressed her hand to her wounded temple which pained her from time to time; she was not uneasy, however, but determined to take a walk in the park before breakfast. In this lovely landscape, where all nature was budding and blossoming, she felt that she had also entered upon a new May, and that the soft and sweet melodies of youth were echoing in her soul; yes, she had refound the tone of her heart—she seemed to pass from out of dark shadows into a new world of poetry and glory; and all this the good Nathan had done—he seemed to her the good genius of her youth, that she had once lost him in the dark paths of error, but he was now smiling and beckoning her on.

“Was it not here,” said Charlotte, “that I lay a few days since, almost in the arms of death? and yet now I live and am rejoicing in a new-found existence. I did not indeed fall from this old tower; but who can say from what height we may fall, and into what abyss, when reason deserts us, and the last branch to which we cling breaks like a reed in our hands? Life is but an illusion, and we imagine our fall is greater than it really is.

“Nathan shall be the bridge over which I pass to my new

life ; here, by your side, old tower, have I found again the good star of my life, and I swear that no dark clouds of error or guilt shall conceal it from my sight."

Filled with these brave resolutions, Charlotte turned towards the castle, and took the short path through the oak allée, which was only separated from the highway by a low fence. She had reached the lake, when a little beggar boy on the road attracted her attention and nodded merrily. He sprang the fence, ran to her, and seized her hand ; as she asked his name, he sprang away, stared at her a moment, and threw a letter at her feet, then disappeared in the bushes.

Charlotte's astonishment was greater than her terror, when she saw Sylberg's writing and seal ; there was a shadow before her eyes for a moment, and her heart trembled for its own weakness, but she remembered her good resolutions, resolved not to read the letter but to destroy it ; she seized a pebble, intending to fold the letter around it, and was about to throw them in the water, when she hesitated, placed the letter in her bosom, and said : " God forbid ! that would be to admit that I am afraid of myself. At breakfast I will give it unopened to the Freiherr ; then he will no longer suspect me."

CHAPTER L.

SCHIMMELMAN, who was generally most punctual, did not appear at breakfast ; he sent the ladies word not to wait for him, as he was occupied with important business. He was, in fact, walking to and fro in his room ; great displeasure and anxiety was expressed in his face, and from time to time he called out, "The miserable man ! Ah, my poor Schröder ! Could one have believed it ! So young and so perverted ! Truly they are well suited to each other ! But wait—you shall play no tricks with me !"

From the greenhouse, Schimmelman had seen the boy throw the letter—had seen Charlotte take it and put it in her bosom ; he knew that Sylberg was in the neighborhood, and believed that Charlotte had taken this early walk to receive an expected letter.

"Confusion ! this Charlotte is worse than I supposed. I was convinced of her repentance by her innocent looks, and now—but patience ! I will protect her against her will ; yes, against her own ungrateful heart !

"Would that the Countess Lindenkron was here ; until she comes, however, I will guard my district well from this dangerous scoundrel."

At this moment a carriage drove up the avenue, and he recognised the Countess. Charlotte was excited by the unexpected appearance of the Countess ; her presence called back all those sad remembrances of the time past, and she lost her self-control entirely when the Countess seized her hand and said, with great emotion :

"Ah ! Mademoiselle Ackerman, I rejoice to find you here in the circle of my friends ; it seems to be the will of fate that we also should be friends."

Charlotte could not restrain her tears, and incapable of utter-

ing a single word, she threw herself almost convulsively into Ulrika's arms.

"This is right, Charlotte, here shall you ever find protection and comfort."

The Freiherr, who still suspected Charlotte of a secret correspondence with the Major, now withdrew to his room, saying to the Countess, that as soon as convenient and agreeable to her the business which had brought her to the castle could be arranged in his study.

Ulrika understood him perfectly, and promised to be there within the hour.

CHAPTER LI.

THE Baron had, in the mean time, been waiting in his hut for a reply to his letter. His impatience increased every moment, but hour after hour passed by, and he received no news from Charlotte. A thousand painful doubts filled his mind with apprehension. One moment he believed that she would grant him the interview. He would have given Heaven for an opportunity to express his repentance and his glowing love. If Charlotte was no longer blinded, one glance at his past life, and his ruin would be completed. Her flight with him could alone protect him from those charges which would cause his dismissal from the service, and besides, he trembled to think what these investigations might bring to light.

Sylberg counted the seconds till twilight, and from the low windows of the hut he observed everything which was passing in the distance. At last the little boy who had given the note to Charlotte, ran over the meadow and informed him that the ladies in a carriage were driving in the direction of the wood.

"That is Charlotte, certainly," said Sylberg, joyfully. "When did one woman keep a secret without confiding it to another, Victory! Soon will I have an advocate in my Charlotte, who will triumph over the old gray head, the Duke, and all the juries in the world."

As he was about to leave the hut an old man, accompanied by some dragoons, entered the door, and with cold politeness inquired the object of his visit to the neighborhood.

"Who are you, sir, and what right have you to ask these questions?" said the Baron, confused, but in his usual imperious tone.

"I am an officer of justice at Wandsbeck. This hut stands in evil repute, and it is my duty to ask what is your business here? What is your name?"

"My name is nothing to you," cried Sylberg. "For my plea-

sure I rode out of Hamburg yesterday, and it pleased me to pass the night here, and in an hour I will return to the city."

"You will not return, sir, till you have answered my questions, told me your name and rank," said the justice, emphatically, casting a significant glance at the dragoons. "This gentleman," said he, dryly and indifferently, "will not leave this hut until I am convinced of his innocence, no matter who you are," said he to Sylberg; "respect in me the majesty of the law. I have several times arrested dangerous thieves in this cabin. Determine then, sir, upon this spot to tell me who you are and your business, or I will take you to Wandsbeck, and throw you in prison."

"I am a nobleman," stammered the Baron, who now began to appreciate his position.

"If you are truly so, you can prove it."

"I am an officer of the King."

"Then I am doubly sorry if you will not give me the proof of it. Appearances are strongly against you. Why should a nobleman take up his quarters in a hut like this, the owner of which has several times been arrested as a rogue? Why should an officer of the King refuse to give his name to a justice?"

"Conduct me to Hamburg," said the Baron, evasively, "and then I will answer all your questions."

"I can only ask you these questions in this district of Holstein."

Sylberg was silent, but his whole manner spoke more clearly than words his boundless rage and embarrassment. So near his goal, he saw himself threatened with an open shame through the zeal of an obscure country officer. His appearance in this notorious hut must be explained. He took the justice aside, and informed him that a love affair and an appointed interview was his only business.

"The law has nothing to do with such affairs, sir, it only asks for your passport; but there are many noble persons resid-

ing in this neighborhood, and if you are a nobleman you certainly know some of these distinguished families."

At this the Baron lost all control over himself, and fell into the most violent passion. He raged, cursed, and stamped with his feet upon the floor.

The justice was not moved by either flattery or abuse. When the stranger would give his name, he could return to Hamburg and not before.

"I am Baron Sylberg, Major in the royal service, and I flatter myself that I can convince you of it to your shame."

The justice declared in a calmly ironical tone that he was fully satisfied.

In place of a rendezvous with Charlotte he had one with the Holstein dragoons, and this gave him a foretaste of the fate which awaited him.

A few moments later, when galloping in wild haste towards Hamburg, he met an open carriage containing two ladies. He gave them but one glance as he flew by, but this was enough to convince him that he had nothing more to hope for.

By Charlotte's side, whose countenance was glowing with health and happiness, sat Ulrika.

CHAPTER LII.

BOTH had recognised him in passing, and the name of Sylberg was now for the first time spoken between them. The Countess was so agitated that Charlotte forgot her own terror at this view of the Baron.

"Yes! that is him!" said Ulrika; "the only man in the world I could hate! I know also how much you have suffered through him. Give me your hand, Lotte—look me in the eye and tell me sincerely, is all over with you and the Baron, or are you in secret still attached to him? You are silent—you turn pale. Well then I tell you I also loved this man, worshipped him! adored him! but I had strength given me to escape his snares."

"What can you think of me?" cried Charlotte; "do you think me either so base or so wretched as to continue to love a man who has forsaken me so shamefully?"

"No, no, it is all past!—he inspires me with terror! I swear to you, Frau Countess, by all that is holy, that he is nothing to me!"

"What brought the Baron here?"

"I cannot prevent him persecuting me—or torturing me," said the young artist, bursting into tears. "Every step this man takes condemns me, and fixes the eye of suspicion on me."

"Say the eye of love, poor child!"

"Love!" cried Charlotte, bitterly. "No, gracious lady, that is no love which martyrs a wounded heart to death by suspicion. This morning I made the best resolutions, and I cannot bear these suspicions. I would rather return to Hamburg than be watched by friends to whom I owe so much."

"Let us alight," said Ulrika, "and return to the Castle on foot. It is a glorious evening, and will inspire us with confidence in each other. You shall have my history with the Baron, and decide if I have not cause to tremble for you."

They left the carriage, and walked hand in hand through the park.

"Precisely at your time of life, dear Lotte, I found my relations to Baron Sylberg just what you have experienced."

She now seated herself, and drew Charlotte down by her side. And now, for the first time, Charlotte received a full account of Sylberg's character and past life. How terribly was she now convinced of the shamelessness and heartlessness of the man who had been her perfect ideal. Nothing had been holy to him. She had confided to him her youth and her innocence. What attention had she given to all warnings of her mother, brother, and sister, and the general voice? It was not horror of him, not detestation of his character, but dread and dismay of her own heart, which made her soul tremble. She no longer complained of fate, or of her faithless lover. She accused herself alone. Warned on every side, she had rushed on to the abyss, and what an abyss! She had continued to love a man who was false and base in all eyes but her own.

Terrible was the tumult in Charlotte's soul. She remembered that she had often felt an inexplicable anguish in his presence. Perhaps this very feeling had bound her to him, and given him power over her heart.

It was almost dark when Ulrika concluded her narrative; the moon shone brightly through the trees, the babbling fountain alone broke the quiet of the evening. Charlotte leaned, with closed eyes, upon the Countess's bosom, whose arms were thrown around her. She wished to give her time to recover, convinced that the moment had come when her love for the unmasked traitor would be crushed.

And now Charlotte, as if awaking from a heavy dream, arose and passed her hand mechanically over her brow, and stared strangely at Ulrika. The Countess was terrified at her pallor, and the convulsed expression of her features, as the rays of the moonlight played upon her. She seemed to be a marble image, gazing at her with dead and soulless eyes.

"I thank you—we will go to the house—I am cold!" was all

that Charlotte uttered, as she rose, and, shivering, wrapped herself in her shawl.

"Receive the unhappy history of my first love as a warning, my dear Lotte," said Ulrika, who began to fear that her narrative had too deeply affected her young friend. "In future you shall read the letters with which the traitor sought to rob me of my husband's love on his death-bed—letters so full of devilish cunning and malice, that they can only be compared to those fearful poisons which murder slowly but surely. Will you have the letters to-morrow, dear Charlotte? Who knows of what service they may be to you?"

"To me?" stammered Charlotte, who shivered as if in an ague fit. "To me, these letters can be of no further use. Enough that I now know my crime fully.

"Oh, my God! how can I bear this?"

"Do not take it so to heart, dear Lotte," said Ulrika, deeply moved by this involuntary cry of a young soul; "even the hardest fate may be borne if we advance to meet it with confidence in God. You are young! Your life is just beginning! Believe me, these trials in youth spare us many tears in later life when the wounds of the soul do not heal so easily. Collect yourself, Charlotte, that our friends at the castle may not know what has kept us so long from their gay circle."

Vain, however, were all efforts of Ulrika at encouragement. Charlotte remained the entire evening still absorbed in herself, and took no part in the conversation. She eat nothing, and stared motionless before her, and at an early hour withdrew to her room. Irmengarde, who sought her soon after, announced that she was asleep.

Whether her frustrated interview with the Baron, or Ulrika's narrative, had so powerfully affected her, was now the question. The Freiherr declared openly that his confidence in her had received a severe blow, and when his daughter left the room, he said:

"We will wait a few days yet quietly, and see if her eyes have been opened to the truth; if not, I must send her back to

her family ; we owe it to our own children to keep from them all knowledge of such errors."

The Countess declared herself more than willing to receive Charlotte in her house. "Give the poor drooping flower the right soil and the right sunshine, and she will raise her lovely head gladly. If God will, this shall be my work and my joy."

CHAPTER LIII.

THE Freiherr received the positive assurance that the strange guest had written a letter, which a boy had secretly delivered to a young lady at the castle. This convinced him that Charlotte was carrying on a secret intercourse with Sylberg, and that she had been false in assuring the Countess that she knew nothing of his presence in the neighborhood. The Baron had also admitted to the justice that he came to a rendezvous. Schimmelman, therefore, considered it his duty to write to Schröder, and give him a full account. He declared also, as delicately as possible, that under present circumstances, he could not trust Charlotte and could not protect her, but the Countess entreated that she might be allowed to accompany her to her home in Hamburg, and this invitation the Freiherr pressed Schröder to accept.

Schröder received and read this letter in the theatre, and handed it to Dorothea. After the rehearsal he found her weeping bitterly in her room. He declared that Charlotte should leave Wandsbeck immediately; that she had shown herself unworthy of the hospitality of his friend. Dorothea insisted that it was still possible that Sylberg had gone into her neighborhood without her knowledge or will.

"How?" said Schröder, passionately. "Did she not receive the letter? did she not deceive the Countess Ulrika? Enough of pity and patience! I no longer believe in her repentance or improvement. She shall come home here to us, who understand her fully; but wait, give me my hat and cane. I will seek this scoundrel in his dwelling."

"For God's sake, what will you do?" cried Dorothea, clinging to him. "Will you enter Sylberg's room forcibly? remember he is armed, and he desires nothing more ardently than that you should commit some violent act against him."

"You are right, Dorothea," cried Schröder, "and yet this villain must be made to confess if he went to Wandsbeck with or without Charlotte's consent."

"And if he declares the first, how will we know if he speaks the truth?"

"Then I will pummell him black and blue."

"And in the other case?"

"Then I will pummell him blue and black."

"Well, the man Schröder and the artist Schröder are two entirely different beings," said Dorothea. "On the stage, calm, clear, reasonable; in life, violent, scornful and unjust."

Schröder knew the truth of these words; he clasped his sister to his heart, and said:

"What will become of me when you leave me in August? whose voice will warn me in my evil hours? I give you willingly to my friend, Dorta, but my heart is bowed down when I think that both Charlotte and yourself will desert me. We three! how much we could have accomplished. This double bond of nature and of art must be torn asunder."

"Lotte's loss to the stage would be irreparable," said Dorothea, "but I cannot believe in it! No! no! she will, she must, return to her profession. In God's name, let the storm which is still trembling in her heart pass over quietly, and you will see that her genius is more mighty than her pain; that her genius, and that alone, will triumph over all, and lead her back to her art."

They were interrupted by a knock at the door, and Herr Kreyenpeter entered, pale and breathless. He announced that Charlotte had arrived on foot from Wandsbeck, and in such a miserable condition that everything was to be feared. She had been put to bed, and the doctor sent for. Madam Ackerman desired her son and daughter to return immediately.

"Ah, my Lotte, my poor sweet Lotte, what has happened to you?" cried Dorothea, blinded by tears.

From her own lips hath no man heard, but we know from

the events at Wandsbeck that they were more than she could bear.

Ulrika's narrative had broken this young and sorely tried heart! The truth, which was intended to save her, the full knowledge of her fearful errors, was for her the dagger-stroke of Odoardo.

The light which the Countess Ulrika flashed over Sylberg's past life kindled the torch to Charlotte's grave.

No one in the castle knew of her secret departure. She had gone to take her accustomed morning walk in the Park; several hours passed, and she did not return; her friends' suspicions were excited, and the neighborhood was searched in vain.

What induced her to return so suddenly to her home was never ascertained. The physician found her burning with fever and raging mad; he declared that she could not live through the night.

In her bosom Sylberg's letter was found unopened—the last proof of her innocence.

About five o'clock, the Freiherr and his wife reached the house, and Charlotte was wrestling with death.

About midnight she breathed her soul out peacefully, in the arms of her friend.

The morning dawn of the tenth of May, found the great and richly-gifted Charlotte Ackerman a smiling corpse; but in the art history of Germany her name is immortal.

The day of her death was a day of gloom for all Germany. The stores were closed; no business was done at the Bourse. During the day thousands of men passed through the street and gazed earnestly and silently at the house in which she died.

A crowd gathered about the Kaisershof, calling loudly for the recruiting officer, and uttering threats and curses; they could scarcely be restrained from throwing stones at the windows, although the host assured them that the Baron had departed early in the morning.

He was never again seen in Hamburg, and nothing more was ever known of his fate.

On the day of her funeral, Charlotte's body, according to the then reigning custom in Hamburg, was laid out in an open coffin. The crowd of persons of all ranks who wished to show her this last honor, and to look upon her sweet fair face once more, was so great that an officer, with a guard, was obliged to keep order. The room was filled with mourners; her coffin was covered with flowers and poems in her honor; ringlets of her fair hair were cut to make into rings and plaits for sweet remembrances.

Her lovely form clothed in white, with the well-earned wreath of laurel on her brow, moved the coldest heart to tears.

Those who looked upon her knew that she died pure in heart. Even in death she was an artist; in her coffin she recalled the graceful Emilia Galotti and the enchanting Marie de Beaumarchais.

On the day of the funeral, the expressions of grief over the dead, bordered on frenzy.

From the Opera House, where she had been taken the night before, she was borne on the fourteenth of May, on a hearse covered with blossoms and myrtle wreaths to St. Peter's Church. Thousands and thousands of sympathizing spectators, mostly clothed in black, accompanied her.

At the entrance of the church her dearest friends and artist companions, with many of the most distinguished persons of Hamburg, received the coffin and bore it to the vault. Brockman made the funeral oration, and a few simple lines were engraved upon the coffin.

THE END.

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